ISLAMIC STUDIES

Pilot Curriculum 2020-2021

Grade 12- Advanced Studies- Stream 1

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Preface and Introduction by Moulana Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi)
Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Islamic Center

بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

نٓ ۚ وَٱلْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ

Nūn! [I swear] by the pen and what they inscribe! (68:1)

Salāmun ʿalaykum,

All praise is for Allah, Lord and Nurturer of the worlds. It is an honor and pleasure to address you dear teachers, administrators, educators, and parents. This āyah of the Qurʾān demonstrates the sanctity of writing. When Allah takes an oath by those who write and that which has been written, it clearly indicates that writing and books are instrumental in shaping the future generations. If we do not fulfill our responsibilities, we will be held accountable. However, if we do a proper job, Allah guarantees us a high position.

We know that Islam places great emphasis on education as a whole. After delving further, we find that education has two formats: formal and informal. Informal education entails formats such as speeches, classes, discussions, or a teacher's interactions within the classroom. Formal education refers to the standards and guidelines that teachers follow when teaching, which is usually a curriculum.

We are honored to be a part of this noble cause of developing and compiling a K-12 curriculum for Islamic Studies and Qurʾān, as well as for life skills and contemporary issues related to our daily lives. As we know, Islam is a complete way of life. Allah says in the Noble Qurʾān:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِى وَنُسُكِى وَمَحْيَاىَ وَمَمَاتِى لِلَّـهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَـٰلَمِينَ

Say, "Surely my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah, Lord of the worlds." (6:162)

From this āyah, we deduce that Islam encompasses all areas of our lives. However, based on our limitations and circumstances this is difficult to implement in all areas of education. Full-time schools generally only allocate a few hours a week for Islamic studies. Similarly, weekend schools also only operate for a few hours once a week, over 30-34 weeks of the year.

Overall, Sunday schools and full-time Islamic schools do not yet have the capacity to adopt a system of complete integration for our children to learn Islam in conjunction with other subjects. Therefore, most schools focus on these five subjects: Qurʾān, ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, and akhlāq.

Alḥamdulillāh, Kisa Kids is pleased to present the pilot version of our Islamic Studies curriculum. The current pilot focuses on the four core subjects: ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, and akhlāq. Inshāʾ Allāh, we hope to further develop the fifth core subject, Qurʾān, in areas such as recitation, tajwīd, mafāhīm (understanding), and tafsīr and deeper understanding.

In Islamic Studies, we've had some great milestones, alḥamdulillāh. The Pre-K-6th curriculum has undergone many iterations and reached a good point. Although we had a pilot for 7th grade, based on input from different individuals, we have transferred some of the topics from 7th grade into 8th grade and added additional lessons.

The 9th-12th grade curriculum is also a compilation of different resources. Although we had created a scope and sequence and planned to develop the lessons ourselves, we ran into some unforeseen hurdles with the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this pandemic, we expedited the launch of RISE Online, a full-time online Islamic school, and Salam Online, an online weekend Islamic school platform that caters to over 250 teachers, principals, and educators across the globe, in collaboration with more than 20 schools during this pandemic era.

We have found that there is an urgent need for online resources during this time; therefore, our team of scholars, educators, and volunteers, including the Kisa Kids curriculum team and Islamic Syllabus team from Australia have created a pilot using different curricula given to us for use. Therefore, we have taken lessons from different sources: Islamic Syllabus, Kisa Kids curriculum, Madressa.net, Sirat, QFatima, and Shaykh Salim Yusufali's work, and compiled them into one pilot, by the will of Allah.

Alḥamdulillāh, with the barakah of this collaboration, we have launched this as Phase 1 of the 7-12 curriculum plan. This will be the pilot for this year, and inshāʾ Allāh, over the course of this year, we will conduct surveys and focus groups to gauge what is working and what is not working.

Based on input from educators, parents, students, and teachers we will strive to improve the curriculum for next year, inshāʾ Allāh. We humbly request all the users, principals, scholars, and students to consider the following points:

- The K-12 curriculum will have lots of errors and mistakes, as well as some ambiguities. We humbly request that you give us your input so we may make improvements, and forgive us for any shortcomings.
- Although the books entail the four core subjects, they may not have the best flow, as the material has been compiled from different curricula, so there may be some repetition in some areas and lack of information in others. Again, we humbly request your input.
- This curriculum is a pilot, not the final edition. We will accommodate suggestions to launch a final one at a later time.
- If anyone has any lesson plans, teaching methodologies, supplemental curriculum, or any additional resources, please share them with us so we can consider incorporating them into the curriculum.

- If someone is working on digital resources, such as presentations, quizzes, games, etc., please share with us via this form so we can disseminate these widely, and others may benefit as well.
- As we are moving toward digitalization, which will require a strong learning management system, we are open to feedback. We value your collaboration so we can avoid duplication, optimize our potential, and see great results, inshāʾAllāh. At the end of the day, our goal is to nurture and plant the seed of love of Qurʾān, Islam, and teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) in the hearts and minds of our children in order to shape their future and attain the best in this world and the Hereafter.

For all questions, concerns, suggestions, and feedback, please contact admin@kisakids.org or admin@salamonline.education.

With Duʿās,

Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi)

Grade 12

Stream 1

Lesson Sequence: 1-10

Advanced Lessons in ‘Aqa’id

We estimate this unit can be taught over 10 lessons.

Lesson 1-2
Islám – The Universal Religion

Al-Islām means to surrender one's will to God and it comes from the Arabic root *s-l-m* (س - ل - م) from which words like *at-taslim* (surrender) and *as-salām* (peace) are also derived. Yet Islām is one of the misunderstood concepts in the world, by most Muslims as well.

The Meaning of Islām in the Qur'ān

It is true that there is only one religion with Allāh and that is Islām:

﴿إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الإِسْلاَمُ ...﴾

Indeed, with Allāh religion is Islām

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:19

It is also true that no other religion is acceptable to Allāh besides Islām:

﴿وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الإِسْلاَمِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الآخِرَةِ مِنْ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾

Should anyone follow a religion other than Islām, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter.

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:85

But what does this really mean? The debate on pluralism vs. exclusivism arises only when we see Islām as one amongst many religions i.e. just as there is Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and so on, some see Islām as yet another 'religion'. Furthermore, just as the Christians follow Jesus ('a) and regard the Bible as their sacred text and the Jews follow the teachings of Moses ('a) and regard the Torah as their sacred text, similarly, many Muslims see themselves as simply, the followers of Muhammad (s) who regard the Qur'ān as their sacred Book. And this precisely is where the problem lies. Before we explain the problem further and correct our understanding of what Islām is and what it means to be a Muslim, let us review the verses of Qur'ān that will give us a holistic understanding of Islām:

﴿فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَى مِنْهُمْ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

And when Isa sensed their (the Jews) faithlessness, he said, 'Who will be my helpers toward Allāh?' The Disciples said, 'We will be helpers of Allāh. We have faith in Allāh, ***and bear witness that we are Muslims****.*

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:52

Nabi Ibrāhim ('a) and his son Nabi Ismā'il ('a) prayed:

﴿رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ ...﴾

'Our Lord, make us submissive to You (lit. ***Muslims for you****), and [raise] from our progeny a Muslim nation (i.e. submissive to You)…'*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:128

﴿وَوَصَّى بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلاَ تَمُوتُنَّ إِلاَّ وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ. أَمْ كُنتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

Ibrāhim enjoined this [creed] upon his children, and [so did] Ya'qub, [saying], 'My children! Allāh has indeed chosen this religion for you; ***so never die except as Muslims.*** *Were you witnesses when death approached Ya'qub, when he said to his children, 'What will you worship after me?' They said, 'We will worship your God, and the God of your fathers, Ibrāhim, Ismā'il and Ishāq, the One God, and to Him do we submit (lit. 'for His sake we are Muslims').'*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:132-133

﴿رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنْ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الأَحَادِيثِ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ﴾

(Nabi Yusuf ('a) said), 'My Lord! You have granted me a share in the kingdom, and taught me the interpretation of dreams. Originator of the heavens and earth! You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter! ***Let me die a Muslim*** *(i.e. in submission to You), and unite me with the Righteous.*

- Surah Yusuf, 12:101

﴿وَقَالَ مُوسَى يَاقَوْمِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُسْلِمِينَ﴾

And Musa said, 'O my people! If you have faith in Allāh, put your trust in Him, ***if you are Muslims*** *(i.e. have submitted to Him).'*

- Surah Yunus, 10:84

﴿... قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

She (the Queen of Sheba) said, 'My Lord! Indeed I have wronged myself, and ***I submit (lit. 'become a Muslim')*** *with Sulaymān to Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds.'*

- Surah an-Naml, 27:44

﴿وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

And when I inspired the Disciples (of Isa ('a)), [saying], 'Have faith in Me and My Apostle,' they said, 'We have faith. ***Bear witness that we are Muslims.'***

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:111

We can clearly see from all the verses above that Islām is not a 'religion' that started in the year 610 CE when Rasulullāh (s) was 40 years old. Rather, Islām is simply the one and only natural path that Allāh chose for the human race and that began with the first human being – Nabi Adam ('a).

The core message and principle of Islām is simply this: there is no god but One God. He is the Only Creator and the Only One worthy of worship. He is Nameless and Formless yet He is omniscient and omnipresent. He cannot be brought to imagination or described. In fact, He can never be known directly. He is recognized only through His signs and His creation. The human being is unique in that he is able to surrender to his or her Creator out of choice and with freewill and so he or she is chosen by Allāh to represent Allāh in the universe and it is through this human being that Allāh manifests His attributes to the rest of His creation.

When we begin to understand Islām in this fashion, we also begin to see why idol worship and any bringing of Allāh into imagination or form, restricts the human being from every knowing Allāh. In the end, Allāh permeates all things yet nothing can embody or incarnate Him. He is in fact the Only Reality. It is as if He is the Sun and all else are simply rays of the Sun that have no reality or existence without Him.

The great mufassir (exegete) of Qur'ān, Allama Sayyid Husayn Tabatabai, wrote in his Tafsir al-Mizān, that during the life of Rasulullāh (s) when the Qur'ān was being revealed, the meaning of Islām was different to what it later came to be known as when the Caliphs ruled as political and temporal leaders and used their military force

to ‘spread’ Islām. What Allama Tabatabai meant was that the Qur’ān does not understand Islām as a ‘religion’ with boundaries like other religions. It simply regards Islām to be its meaning – surrender to the Creator. The Qur’ān therefore talks of Islām, not as a religion, but as a universal way of life that is most natural and that brings success to humans when they live by it, because the whole universe lives by it and it is the ‘religion’ to which our instinct leans.

We could say, other than humans who choose not to be ‘Muslims’, everything in the universe is a ‘Muslim’ (i.e. surrendered to Allāh) – the mountains, the oceans, the forests, the animals and birds, the angels, the planets and stars, and so on. Thus the Qur’ān tells us:

﴿أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ﴾

Do they, then, seek a religion other than Allāh’s, while to Him submits whoever there is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they will be brought back?

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:83

So when the Qur’ān invites humans to be Muslims, it is not asking them to ‘change’ religions or adopt something new. It is simply asking them to restore their natural state of existence where they are in constant surrender to Allāh like everything else.

Rasulullāh (s) is reported to have said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُولَدُ عَلَى الفِطْرَة فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَودَانهُ أو يُنَصرَانهُ أو يُمَجِسَانهُ

Every newborn is born on the instinct (of Islām). Then it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Zoroastrian.

Do you see why, therefore, it makes no sense at all to talk of pluralism or how ‘all religions are right because they teach the same good values’ and so on? There is no multiple religions – not because one is right and another is wrong – but because there *cannot* be more than one religion from One Creator. Two opposing understandings of God cannot both be ‘natural’. One will have to be unnatural.

What we can say, of course, is that every time humans went astray and forgot the original message of Islām, and Allāh sent another messenger (nabi or rasul) to guide people back to Islām. Those who refused to accept it still remained with some of the original truth that a previous prophet had taught. This is why we see parts of every religion still showing the same truth as the original religion of Allāh - Islām.

When a non-Muslim wishes to embrace Islām today, they require several years of research and thinking before they revert to Islām. Yet in the days of Rasulullāh (s) and the Aimmah (‘a), people would often embrace Islām after a brief conversation

only. Why do you think so? It is because today, we present Islām mixed with a lot of culture and it appears to be a very complex religion that one has to 'study' fully before embracing it. Whereas in the original message of the Qur'ān, people were told to simply shed what was wrong in their beliefs and they became Muslims.

As an example, in the Qur'ān's vision, if a Hindu wanted to become a Muslim, he doesn't need to change his language, what he eats, how he dresses, his name, and so on. He simply gives up worshipping idols and multiple gods or deities. He professes that there is only One God and that he will prostrate and surrender before none other than God and worship Him alone. And as a mark of this surrender, he acknowledges all the prophets and messengers or Allāh and all the scriptures and angels. And he is a Muslim!

﴿آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلاَئِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لاَ نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ﴾

The Apostle has faith in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and all the faithful. Each [of them] has faith in Allāh, His angels, His scriptures and His apostles. [They declare,] 'We make no distinction between any of His apostles.' And they say, 'We hear and obey. Our Lord, forgive us, and toward You is the return.'

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:285

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلاَئِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلاَلاً بَعِيدًا﴾

O you who have faith! Have faith in Allāh and His Apostle and the Book that He has sent down to His Apostle and the Book He had sent down earlier. Whoever disbelieves in Allāh and His angels, His Books and His apostles and the Last Day, has certainly strayed into far error.

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:136

﴿قُلْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لاَ نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

Say, 'We have faith in Allāh, and in what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Ibrāhim, Ismā'il, Ishāq, Ya'qub and the Tribes (of Bani Isrā'il), and that

which Musa and 'Isa were given, and the prophets, from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit.'

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:84

Thereafter, the issue of praying, fasting, etc. are a part of the 'shari'ah' (Islāmic legislation) rather than deen (religion). The shari'ah may even have changed from one prophet to another – but deen never changed and cannot ever change. A revert Muslim prays, fasts, etc. as a sign of his or her acceptance of the Qur'ān's commands and his or her surrender to God's laws that are meant to bring him or her closer to the Creator.

One could therefore say that just like Allāh, Islām actually does not have a name or a limited form. The word Islām simply highlights the primary call to return to the universal and most natural way of life i.e. surrendering to the One and Only Creator. That is why, in some verses of the Qur'ān, when Allāh mentions how the Jews boast of being 'Jews' and the Christians boast of following 'Christianity', the Muslims are not told to say, we follow 'Islām' or we are 'Muslims'. Instead of labelling themselves, Muslims are told to simply say, they follow the upright (*hanif*) and natural path that Nabi Ibrāhim ('a) followed:

﴿وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

*And they say, 'Be either Jews or Christians, that you may be [rightly] guided.' Say, 'Rather, [we will follow] the creed (millah) of Ibrāhim, **a hanif**, and he was not one of the polytheists.'*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:135

﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ...﴾

*And who has a better religion than him who submits his will to Allāh, being virtuous, and follows the creed (millah) of Ibrāhim, **a hanif**?*

- Surah an-Nisa, 4:125

﴿قُلْ إِنَّنِي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

*Say, 'Indeed my Lord has guided me to a straight path, the upright religion, the creed of Ibrāhim, **a hanif,** and he was not one of the polytheists.'*

- Surah al-An'ām, 6:161

﴿وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ...﴾

(Nabi Yusuf (‘a) said), ‘I follow the creed of my fathers, Ibrāhim, Ishāq and Ya’qub. It is not for us to ascribe any partner to Allāh.’

- Surah Yusuf, 12:38

﴿ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

*Then We revealed to you [saying], ‘Follow the creed of Ibrāhim, **a hanif**, and he was not one of the polytheists.’*

- Surah an-Nahl, 16:123

Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a) is mentioned repeatedly because he is seen as ‘the father of monotheism’ since he restored Tawhid in the world when Shirk (polytheism) was rampant. All religions that claim to be monotheistic trace their origins back to him. Notice however that when the Qur’ān says Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a) was neither a Jew nor a Christian, it first describes him as a ‘hanif’ and then as a ‘Muslim’:

﴿مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلاَ نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

*Ibrāhim was neither a Jew nor a Christian. Rather, **he was a hanif, a Muslim**, and he was not one of the polytheists.*

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:67

Why doesn’t the verse call Ibrāhim (‘a) a ‘Muslim’ directly? It is for fear that it will be seen as a label and a contrast to being a ‘Jew’ or a ‘Christian’. In other words, one who surrenders to Allāh (i.e. a Muslim) is not ‘this’ or ‘that’. He is simply one who follows the natural and universal way that all of Allāh’s creation follows. It is only to be able to talk about this Path and relating to it, that Allāh has given it the name Islām and named those who follow this Path, Muslims:

﴿ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمْ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا ...﴾

...He named you ‘Muslims’ before (in previous scriptures), and in this (the Qur’ān)...

- Surah al-Hajj, 22:78

So when the Qur’ān declares that ‘the only religion with Allāh is Islām’ (3:19), we need to bear in mind that we are not followers of Prophet Muhammad (s) only. We are followers of all the prophets. And Rasulullāh (s) is simply the final messenger who brings the final revelation to all mankind and clarifies the original message that

Adam, Nuh, Ibrāhim, Musa, Isa (peace be on them all!) and all the prophets and all the messengers between them brought and preached. The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are also simply a continuation of God’s guidance to the human race towards Islām and primarily and essentially Teachers of Tawhid.

Allāh promised Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a) that there will be Imāms from his descendants but they will not unjust (2:124) and Allāh also mentions His favours and blessings on the progeny of Nabi Ibrahim (‘a) (4:54) and we know that the Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are descendants of Nabi Ibrahim (‘a) and of course the most worthy of those qualified by these verses of the Qur’ān.

We should therefore invite others to Islām. But when we invite them to follow Islām as taught by the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) of Rasulullāh (s), remember we are not inviting people to ‘a new’ or alternative religion. We are simply asking them to restore their understanding of God to the original, universal and natural understanding that God always wanted for the human race. And it is to this understanding that Imām al-Mahdi (‘atfs) will bring all of mankind. This is what the Qur’ān means when it says, there will come a time when Islām will prevail over all false understandings of God and there will be nothing but Islām in the whole world:

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُم فِي الأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لاَ يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

Allāh has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors, ***and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them****, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear,* ***while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me.*** *And whoever is ungrateful after that—it is they who are the transgressors.*

- Surah an-Nur, 24:55

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾

It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance ***and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions,*** *though the polytheists should be averse.*

- Surah at-Tawbah, 9:33

Project Ideas:

Choose any one of these four points and write a brief essay on it, explaining what you understand of it:

1. Muslims insists on calling the final message brought by Rasulullāh (s) 'Islām' and themselves as 'Muslims'. Other religions are named after a person (Christianity, Buddhism) or place (Judaism, Hinduism). The Orientalists tried quite hard to name Muslims as 'Mohamedans' and Islām as 'Mohamedanism' but failed to do so. Why is it so important that we insist we are Muslims and our deen is Islām?

2. Imām 'Ali b. Ali Tālib ('a)'s definition of Islām:

   لَأَنْسُبَنَّ اَلْإِسْلاَمَ نِسْبَةً لَمْ يَنْسُبْهَا أَحَدٌ قَبْلِي اَلْإِسْلاَمُ هُوَ اَلتَّسْلِيمُ وَ اَلتَّسْلِيمُ هُوَ اَلْيَقِينُ وَ اَلْيَقِينُ هُوَ اَلتَّصْدِيقُ وَ اَلتَّصْدِيقُ هُوَ اَلْإِقْرَارُ وَ اَلْإِقْرَارُ هُوَ اَلْأَدَاءُ وَ اَلْأَدَاءُ هُوَ اَلْعَمَلُ

   'I will define Islām in a manner no one has defined before me: Islām is submission (*at-taslim*); and submission is conviction (*al-yaqin*); and conviction is affirmation (*at-tasdiq*); and affirmation is acknowledgement (*al-iqrār*); and acknowledgement is the discharge (of obligations) (*al-adā*), and the discharge of obligations is action (*al-'amal*).'[2]

   Explain this hadith by elaborating on it.

3. In 16:52, the Qur'ān calls Islām *the enduring religion* (ad-*din wāsiba*).

   ﴿وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاصِبًا أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَتَّقُونَ﴾

   To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and to Him belongs ***the enduring religion****. Will you, then, be wary of other than Allāh?*

   - Surah al-Nahl, 16:52

   Discuss the verse above with emphasis on why you think 'the enduring religion' is such an apt description of Islām. What do you think it means?

[2] Sayyid ar-Radi, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, aphorism 125; al-Alusi, *Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'āni*, 3:19.

4. A Jew once asked Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib (‘a), ‘what is Islām?’ Imām Ali (‘a) replied him that Islām is:

التَعْظِيْم لأمْر الله وَ الشَفَقَة عَلَى خَلْق الله

To respect the command of Allāh and to have love and compassion for the creatures of Allāh.

In other words, Islām is about service to the Creator and service to His creation. Allāh’s creation includes all human beings, regardless of their faith or race and all animals, birds and everything we perceive as living or non-living around us, including the environment and the entire universe.

If we ever wish to see how much of a ‘Muslim’ we are, we should ask ourselves: ‘how much do I respect Allāh’s commands and how much love do I have for His creation?’ Elaborate on the importance of these two facets of Islām: Submission to the Creator and Service to the Creation.

Lesson 3-4
Alláh (s.w.t)

In this and the next lesson, we wish to look at Tawhid more deeply. Tawhid is the root and cornerstone of Islām. Everything else in Islām rests on and depends on Tawhid. How perfect one's 'Islām' is depends on how deeply one understands Tawhid.

In particular, we would like to understand:

1. How the mind is incapable of 'knowing' the Creator directly. The Creator can only be known by the mind through His Signs.
2. How the Creator *can* be 'known' directly but only by the heart. This is done by undertaking a journey of complete surrender towards the Creator, such that one is 'stripped' of one's human attributes and one allows the Creator to use him or her to reflect His own attributes to the rest of His creation.

The Complexity of Becoming a Muwahhid

The subject of Tawhid (monotheism, unicity of God) is perhaps the deepest of all matters to grasp in religion. It is the most difficult to imagine and conceive, and most entangled to unravel, because it is highly above the general topics that human understanding grasps, and much beyond the common theories and ideas that the human intellect is familiar with.

Consider for example, the following hadith of Imām as-Sādiq ('a) to his companion Hishām b. Al-Hakam:

> And the Name is different from the Named. So one who worshipped the Name ('Allāh') without the Meaning behind it has denied God (*faqad kafara*) and has worshipped nothing. And one who worshipped the Name and the Meaning has associated a partner to God (*faqad ashraka*) and worshipped two gods. But one who worshipped the Meaning without the Name, then that is indeed Tawhid... (the word) 'Allāh' has a Meaning that all these Names (Asmā al-Husna) point to yet none of them are Him.[3]

Or consider the sermon of Imām Ali ('a) in which he describes God as follows:

> Praise is due to Allāh whose praise cannot be achieved by speakers, whose bounties cannot be counted by those who count, and whose right cannot be fulfilled even by those who strive to do so. He, whom the highest of intellectual efforts cannot comprehend and the deepest diving of understanding cannot grasp. He, for whose

[3] Kulayni, *Usul al-Kāfi*, v. 2, Chapter on the Meanings of Names, p. 114

> attributes there is no limits; no eulogy of praise exists, no time is ordained and no duration is fixed.[4]

Clearly then, the subject of trying to understand our Creator who is nameless and formless is complicated and bound to be perceived in diverse ways by different minds, because of the multiplicity of thinking with which mankind is created. Every individual has a separate understanding and experience of life and this in turn affects his or her understanding of God.

The Qur'ān affirms this diversity when it says:

﴿... قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُوا الأَلْبَابِ﴾

Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only those who possess intellect take admonition.

- Surah az-Zumar, 39:9

﴿فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّى عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلاَّ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا. ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنْ الْعِلْمِ...﴾

So avoid those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life of the world. ***That is the ultimate reach of their knowledge.***

- Surah an-Najm, 53:29-30

﴿... فَمَالِ هَؤُلاَءِ الْقَوْمِ لاَ يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا﴾

What is the matter with these people that they would not understand any matter?

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:78

﴿... انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمْ الآيَاتِ ثُمَّ انظُرْ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ﴾

Look how We clarify the signs for them, and yet, look, how they go astray!

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:75

So although Allāh has hardwired the nature of all His creation to instinctively lean towards Him, their Creator, (what we call *fitra*[5]), yet there is a great difference and a wide chasm between what one human mind grasps as the meaning of Tawhid versus another.

[4] Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 1.

[5] Cf. Qur'ān, 30:30 for 'the *fitra* of Allāh on which He patterned humans' as well as the Prophetic hadith, 'every newborn is born on the *fitra*' that is given in Lesson 2.

What does ‘One God’ Mean?

Some people's intellect, for example, leads them to idol-worship. They are convinced that God incarnates in different forms. So they carve idols and statues from wood and stone, and even from flour, cheese and clay made with urine of goats and sheep. Then they declare these to be partners and colleagues of God. They worship these idols and beg them for their needs, showing utmost devotion to them. Even if they claim that there is only one God, it is not long before God is discarded and their full attention is devoted to the idols that they imagine fulfils their needs.

And if such people were to give up idol worship, their relationship with the One God will be the same as with the idols – only to ask for their needs and worship in fear of displeasing God. Furthermore, the call to ‘One’ God by Rasulullāh (s) was understood by the ignorant Arabs (before his b*i’thah*) as a call to a numerical ‘oneness’. It was only a number to them. So they could not understand why they should give up the advantage of having many gods and limit themselves to One God.

﴿وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنْذِرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ. أَجَعَلَ الآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ﴾

And they are amazed that there has come to them a Warner from among themselves; and the disbelievers say: “This is a sorcerer, a liar. What! Does he make the gods a single God? This is surely a strange thing!”

- Surah Sād, 38:4-5

Whereas what the Qur’ān was calling them to was the realization that there is only One God - not as a number - but because there *cannot* be another God besides Him:

﴿وَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الرَّحْمَانُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

Your god is the One God, there is no god except Him, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:163

﴿هُوَ الْحَيُّ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ فَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ...﴾

He is the Living One, there is no god except Him. So supplicate Him, putting exclusive faith in Him....

- Surah Ghāfir, 40:65

In other words, it is not so much that there is ‘One’ God as much as the fact that there is ‘Only God’. The problem with thinking of God as a numerical ‘One’ is that the mind will inevitably distinguish that ‘One’ from another or ‘others’ through confinement of space and dimension.

When we say Allāh is One, His Oneness cannot be compared and contrasted to anything. If I say 'Zayd is one man', you may be able to conceive that there can be another man but he does not exist in the context of my statement. But can the mind imagine Zayd as one man besides whom it is impossible and inconceivable for another man to exist?

It is difficult because the mind cannot comprehend how anything can exist without having a beginning and an origin. And if something has an origin, then surely another like it can also have an origin. It is for this reason that even when some people say 'Allāh is Eternal', they mistakenly think of 'eternal' as endless time. But what is time? It is a measure of the amount of movement in moving bodies. How can it be perceived for Allāh? He is not bound by the limits of time. He created Time. It is therefore hard to imagine eternity as timelessness, let alone imagine how Allāh is 'Eternal'. Can you imagine something existing in a dimension of 'no-time and no-space' let alone the Creator Himself?

Besides the attribute of being *Ahad* (the Only One), the same is true with Allāh's other attributes (*sifāt*). He is Living, but without any taint of non-existence. He is Powerful but not in the sense that He can be subdued or His Power can be measured against anything. Hence He says:

﴿... إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ...﴾

...indeed all might belongs to Allāh...

- Surah Yunus, 10:65

﴿... لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ..﴾

...Nothing is like Him[6]*...*

- Surah ash-Shura, 42:11

Yet if we were to say, 'Allāh is not just All-Powerful – He is Power itself. Allāh is not just All-Knowing – He is Knowledge Itself' and so on, then the mind immediately thinks of Power and Knowledge as non-conscious and abstract concepts and therefore God becomes impersonal and pantheistic as simply a universal force or energy at best. It is for this reason that we are told in hadith not to try and rationally understand Allāh directly but to understand Him through His signs. And also, anything you imagine Allāh to be – that He is not. In other words, Allāh cannot be known by anyone but His own self. Even when we surrender to Him completely and lose ourselves in His Love, He is only known when He knows Himself through us and when there is no 'I' to know 'Him'.

[6] Which can also be translated as, 'There is nothing like His likeness.'

Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿... وَلاَ يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا﴾

...but they cannot comprehend Him in their knowledge.

- Surah Tā Hā, 20:110

﴿سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ إِلاَّ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ﴾

Clear (and above) is Allāh of whatever they describe [about Him], - [all] except Allāh's exclusive servants.

- Surah as-Sāffāt, 37:159-160

And yet, when these 'exclusive servants' describe their Creator, how do they describe Him? Rasulullāh (s) 'describes' Allāh as follows:

لا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْت عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

I do not count Your praise; You are as You have praised Yourself.

And in Dua al-Mashlul taught by Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) - just before he glorifies Allāh with all His Beautiful Names (Asmā al-Husna) – Imām Ali ('a) confesses to Allāh:

يا حَيُّ لا اِلـهَ اِلاّ اَنْتَ، يا هُوَ يا مَنْ لا يَعْلَمُ ما هُوَ وَلا كَيْفَ هُوَ وَلا حَيْثُ هُوَ اِلاّ هُوَ

O Ever-Living, there is no god but You! O He! O One Whom no one knows <u>what</u> He is or <u>how</u> He is or <u>where</u> He is, except He!

Therefore even the attributes of perfection that we use for Allāh (such as Omnipotent (al-Qādiru), Omniscient (al-'Aalimu), etc.) are limited attributes, and far be it from His glory to be subject to limitation and restriction.

In a most amazing expression on God, the Commander of the Faithful (Amir al-Mu'minin ('a)) said:

> The foremost in religion is the knowledge of Him; the perfection of knowing Him is to testify Him; the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness; the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to adhere to Him purely; and the perfection of adhering to Him purely is to deny Him attributes because every attribute testifies that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed testifies that it is different from the attribute.
>
> Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allāh joins Him (to another thing) and who

> joins Him (to another thing) regards Him two; and who regards Him two recognizes parts for Him; and who recognizes parts for Him is ignorant of Him; and who is ignorant of Him pointed at Him; and who pointed at Him admitted limitations for Him; and who admitted limitations for Him numbered Him ...[7]

The words of Imām Ali (‘a) in the sermon above, that ‘*perfection of adhering to Him purely is to deny Him attributes...*’ is alluding to the fact that when we say Allāh is All-Knowing, we are incapable of thinking of Him with all his other infinite attributes at the same time. And when we try and think of Him as being All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All-Loving, etc. at the same time, we merely ‘join’ these attributes and try and bring them together but that is wrong because Imām Ali (‘a) continues to explain, ‘*Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allāh joins Him and who joins Him regards Him two; and who regards Him two recognizes parts for Him...*’

Allamah Tabatabai in his Tafsir al-Mizān explains that when a person reaches unique levels and understandings of Tawhid and becomes a ‘Friend’ of Allāh, then he or she also realizes his or her inability to know Allāh or to ascribe to Him the attributes worthy of His Greatness and Majesty. Such a person sees that whatever attributes he or she uses for Allāh are merely ideas that have been perceived by looking at created things and then amplifying them for Allāh.

The following beautiful sermon also shows that Allāh is described by what He *is not* rather than what He *is*:

Shaykh as-Saduq reports from Imām Abu Abd Allāh Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) that while Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) was delivering a sermon on the pulpit of Kufah, a man named Dhi’lib stood up - and he had a fluent tongue, eloquent speech and a brave heart - and said, ‘Commander of the Faithful! Have you seen your Lord?’ Imām Ali (‘a) replied, ‘Woe unto thee, O Dhi’lib! I am not the one to worship Whom I have not seen.’ And Dhi'lib said, ‘Commander of the Faithful! How did you see Him?’ And Imām Ali (‘a) said:

> ‘O Dhi’lib! Eyes do not see Him through eyesight but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. Woe unto thee, O Dhi’lib! Indeed my Lord is the most kind yet He is not described in terms of kindness; the most exalted, but not described in terms of exaltedness; the greatest, but not described in terms of greatness; the most grand, but not described in terms of thickness.
>
> He is before everything, yet it is not said that there is <u>before</u>; He is after everything, yet it is not said that for Him there is an <u>after</u>. He willed creation but not through effort; He is in everything, but neither intermingled with them nor separate from them. He is Manifest but not in physical sense; He is Evident but not through sighting with eyes. He is separate but not because of distance; He is near but not by proximity....
>
> He is existing but not after non-existence. He is the Doer, but not under compulsion; the Ordainer, but not with movement... He hears and sees but not

[7] Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 1.

depending on any organ. Space does not encompass Him, Time does not accompany Him and Attributes do not limit Him.

His Being preceded Time, and His existence preceded Non-existence, and His eternity preceded the beginning. By His creating the senses it was known that He has no senses; and by His making the substances it was recognized that He has no substance; and by His creating the contraries in various matters it is known that He has no contrary; and by the similarity between things it is known that there is nothing similar to Him.

He has made light contrary to darkness, dryness the opposite of moisture, and cold the contrast of heat. (And because He made all these, none of these apply to Him).

He produces affinity between separate things, which are then joined together. These things, by their separation lead us to their Separator and by their joining point to their Joiner; and this is the word of Allāh, the Mighty, the Great: *In all things We have created pairs that you may take admonition* (Qur'ān, 51:49). He separated them with a before and after, in order that it may be known that for Him there is no before or after.

They (all things created) prove through their nature that their Creator has no nature; their being bound by time makes it known that He Who thus binds them is not bound by time. He veils some of them from others, that it may be understood that there is no veil between Him and His creation - except the creation itself. He was the Sustainer when there was no sustained, the God when there was no worshipper, the Knower when there was no known, and the Hearer when there was nothing to be heard.'

Then Imām Ali ('a) recited, saying:

"And my Master was always well-known by praise,
And my Master was always described for magnanimity;
And He was, when there was no light to illuminate,
Nor was there darkness keeping to horizons;
So our Master is unlike the whole creation,
And unlike all that could be imagined by minds."[8]

Conclusion

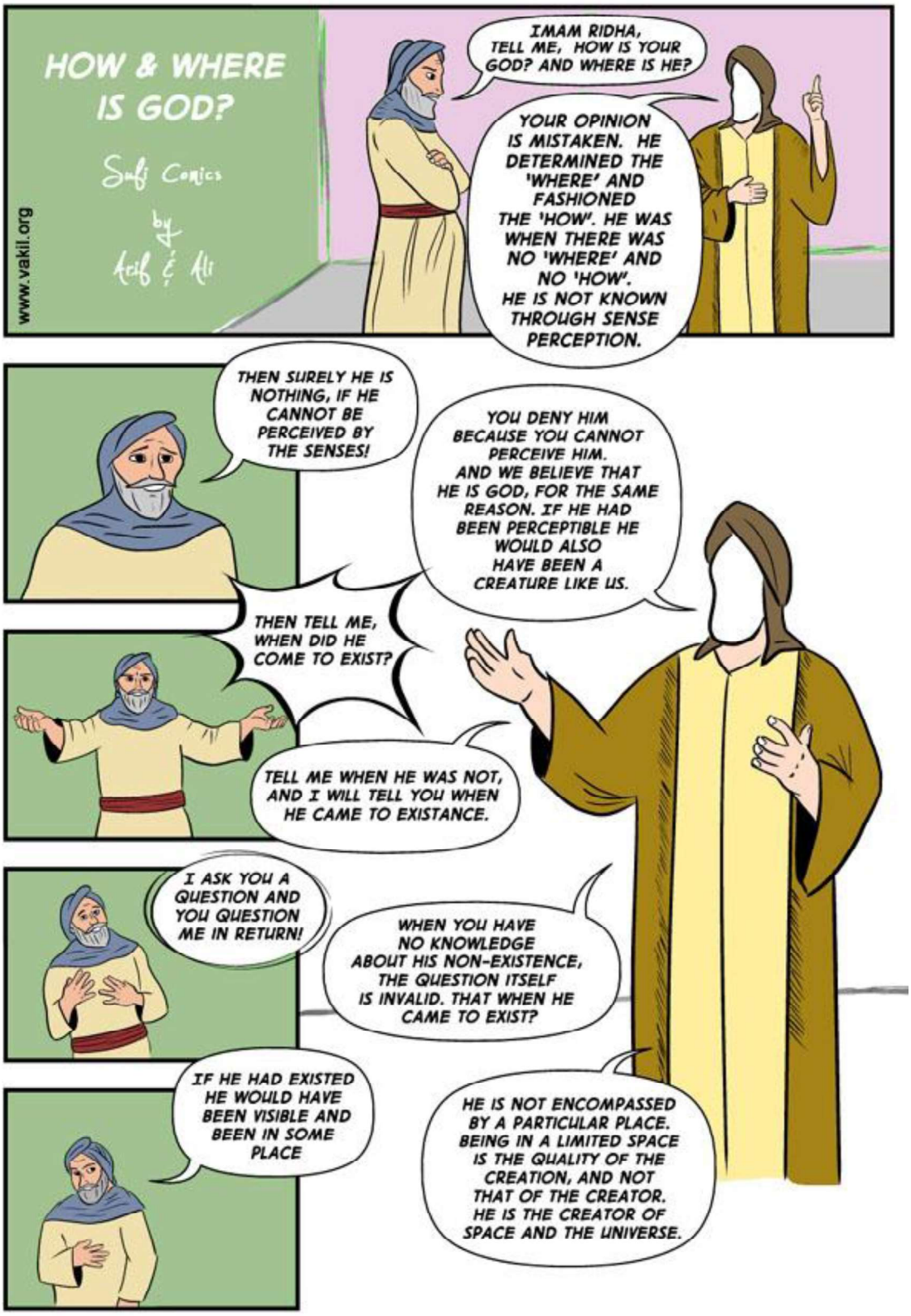
Explaining the meaning of 'One God' to a Bedouin, Imām Ali ('a) once said that when we say 'Allāh is One', we do not mean there is no other God in the numerical sense. Rather we mean there is nothing like Him and He is One in His Essence (Dhāt). He cannot be divided in existence, reason, or in imagination.

[8] Shaykh Saduq, *at-Tawhid*. Some parts of this sermon can be found in Nahj al-Balāgha sermons 179 and 186. Tabatabai, Tafsir al-Mizān, v. 11, p. 121-122 (WOFIS edition).

Similarly, when we say 'Allāhu Akbar' (Allāh is Greater), we do not mean He is 'Greater than anything else' (*Allāhu akbar min kulli shay*) because nothing can be compared to His Greatness and in fact He was al-Akbar (the Greatest) even when there was nothing in existence. Rather by saying 'Allāhu Akbar' we mean 'Allāh is Greater than to be described by anyone' (*Allāhu akbar min an yusaf*).

And therefore any interrogative particle like When? Why? How? Who? Where? What? And so on, cannot be used for Allāh. For in the words of Imām Ali ('a), 'He who describes Him puts limits on Him, and he who puts limits on Him counts Him, and he who counts Him rejects His eternity.'

In the next lesson, we shall study how Allāh is 'known' through the heart and the validity of this process or journey 'towards' Allāh, otherwise known as the *Science of 'Irfān*.


HOW & WHERE IS GOD?
Sufi Comics
by
Atif & Ali
www.yakil.org
IMAM RIDHA, TELL ME, HOW IS YOUR GOD? AND WHERE IS HE?
YOUR OPINION IS MISTAKEN. HE DETERMINED THE 'WHERE' AND FASHIONED THE 'HOW'. HE WAS WHEN THERE WAS NO 'WHERE' AND NO 'HOW'. HE IS NOT KNOWN THROUGH SENSE PERCEPTION.
THEN SURELY HE IS NOTHING, IF HE CANNOT BE PERCEIVED BY THE SENSES!
YOU DENY HIM BECAUSE YOU CANNOT PERCEIVE HIM. AND WE BELIEVE THAT HE IS GOD, FOR THE SAME REASON. IF HE HAD BEEN PERCEPTIBLE HE WOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN A CREATURE LIKE US.
THEN TELL ME, WHEN DID HE COME TO EXIST?
TELL ME WHEN HE WAS NOT, AND I WILL TELL YOU WHEN HE CAME TO EXISTANCE.
I ASK YOU A QUESTION AND YOU QUESTION ME IN RETURN!
WHEN YOU HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIS NON-EXISTENCE, THE QUESTION ITSELF IS INVALID. THAT WHEN HE CAME TO EXIST?
IF HE HAD EXISTED HE WOULD HAVE BEEN VISIBLE AND BEEN IN SOME PLACE
HE IS NOT ENCOMPASSED BY A PARTICULAR PLACE. BEING IN A LIMITED SPACE IS THE QUALITY OF THE CREATION, AND NOT THAT OF THE CREATOR. HE IS THE CREATOR OF SPACE AND THE UNIVERSE.

Lesson 5-6
Alláh (s.w.t.) (cont'd)

In the previous lesson, we concluded that the human mind is incapable of knowing Allāh or understanding His Essence (Dhāt) directly. Hence the Qur'ān points us to Allāh, not directly, but through His creation and His favours as His signs and proof of His Being. For example:

﴿... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لاَ يَسْتَنقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ﴾

Indeed those whom you invoke besides Allāh will never create [even] a fly even if they all rallied to do so! And if a fly should take away something from them, they cannot recover that from it. Feeble is the seeker and the sought!

- Surah al-Hajj, 22:73

﴿خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَأَلْقَى فِي الأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنْ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ. هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ...﴾

He created the heavens without any pillars that you may see, and cast firm mountains in the earth lest it should shake with you, and He has scattered in it every kind of animal. And We sent down water from the sky and caused every splendid kind [of plant] to grow in it. ***This is the creation of Allāh. Now show Me what others besides Him have created...***

- Surah Luqmān, 31:10-11

﴿يَاأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ خَالِقٍ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنْ السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ﴾

O mankind! Remember Allāh's blessing upon you! Is there any creator other than Allāh who provides for you from the sky and the earth? There is no god except Him. So where do you stray?

- Surah al-Fātir, 35:3

﴿قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَعِينٍ﴾

Say, 'Tell me, should your water sink down [into the ground], who will bring you running water?'

- Surah al-Mulk, 67:30

﴿قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ أَفَلاَ تَسْمَعُونَ. قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ أَفَلاَ تُبْصِرُونَ. وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ﴾

Say, 'Tell me, if Allāh were to make the night perpetual over you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allāh could bring you light? Will you not then listen?' Say, 'Tell me, if Allāh were to make the day perpetual over you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allāh could bring you night wherein you could rest? Will you not then perceive?' Out of His mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein and that you may seek from His grace and so that you may give thanks.

- Surah al-Qasas, 28:71-73

And many other such verses.[9]

On the other hand, we find many verses of the Qur'ān inviting us to 'know' Allāh and to realize Who He is. Numerous traditions tell us that humans are very special to Allāh because they are His only creation that is able to 'know' Him and represent Him to His creation.

For example, consider the following verse:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالإِنسَ إِلاَّ لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may worship Me.

- Surah adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:56

The exegetes (mufassirun) are unanimous, and the Shi'ah have quoted Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) as saying, that 'worship Me' (*ya'budun*) in this verse means 'know Me' (*ya'rifun*).

And this makes perfect sense because prior to the creation of humans, everything else was already worshipping Allāh (and continues to do so):

[9] **Project/Homework Idea:** Review Surah al-Wāqi'ah verses 57-73 for other such arguments of the bounties of Allāh (s.w.t) and write a brief essay listing all the arguments can you find in these verses. In what ways are humans so dependent on these bounties for survival?

﴿تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لاَ تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا﴾

The seven heavens glorify Him, and the earth [too], and whoever is in them. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Indeed He is all-forbearing, all-forgiving.

- Surah al-Isrā, 17:44

If the purpose of humans was to glorify Allāh and worship Him in the ritual sense only, then there would be no special reason for Allāh to say humans and jinn were created to 'worship' Him.[10]

We therefore conclude, the purpose of life is to 'know' Allāh. This knowing however is not a rational or intellectual knowing that is often called *'ilm*. Rather it is *ma'rifah*, which is better translated as 'realization'. And from the word *ma'rifah* is derived *'Irfān* (the science of realizing God or becoming enlightened) and *'ārif(a)*, one who 'knows' Allāh (plural is *'urafā*).

'Irfān – The Science of Journeying to God

Over the centuries, the humans who struggled physically against their egoic selves to 'know' their Lord have recorded their struggle as a 'journey' that involves various steps or stages of progression.

The purpose of this lesson is not to describe the 'journey' or stages in 'Irfān but to emphasize its validity in Islām as well as the fact that each human being must undertake this journey individually. The process of becoming an 'ārif and fulfilling the purpose of one's existence cannot be taught by one to another. A teacher of 'Irfān can only guide his or her students and help them experience and discover sublime truths for themselves. But in the end, it is an individual experience.

The reason why the 'realization' of tawhid cannot be taught in a class or explained in words is because to explain something we depend on language and words. Language is the result of human physical and emotional experiences and its words describe what we can see, touch, hear, smell, feel, taste. Tawhid is understood by the heart in a language that has no words and transcends physical sensation or sensory experience. No matter how hard we try to explain it in words, the mind will always misunderstand it. As we saw in the previous lesson, even Rasulullāh (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt ('a) described Allāh only by saying Who He is not!

[10] The jinn are also said to be sentient beings with freewill but while they have been given greater physical abilities over humans, their capacity to know Allāh is less; which is why, all prophets, messengers and Imāms were always human, even over the jinn.

The need to want to 'know' one's Creator is so natural that one could say it is also part of the human instinct (*fitra*). We see for example, that although most people are preoccupied with earning their livelihood and pay little attention to spiritual matters, yet every person has an inherent desire to know the truth. Sometimes a misfortune in life needs to be experienced before this desire becomes a determined purpose of one's life and forces one to think deeply about life and its purpose.

The lives of the 'urafā (pl. of 'ārif) also tells us that once one begins focusing on gaining proximity to Allāh, the 'pull' felt makes one forget all else and removes the desire of everything besides Allāh that other uninitiated humans feel. Most significant about the 'urafā is the fact that they no longer worship and obey Allāh out of fear or greed but out of love and with true sincerity. Such individuals are in fact ashamed of worshipping Allāh for His rewards instead of simply His Magnanimity and His being worthy of adoration. The 'urafā express how they feel with an anecdote given by the famous poet-mystic Sa'di in his famous work Bustān:

> Someone once criticized Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna because of his love for Iyāz. 'What charm has he, the Sultan's friend Iyāz?' he remarked, 'A flower indeed with neither colour nor smell. How strange that the nightingale should set its heart upon such a thing.' Now Iyāz was a short, unattractive man whom most people would avoid and describe as 'ugly'.
>
> Someone conveyed these remarks to the Sultan who said, 'I love Iyāz for his character and disposition and not for his looks or his stature.'
>
> One day, the Sultan went out on a parade and passed by a narrow defile where one of his treasure-chests broke open after a camel fell. The Sultan, unlimited in his treasures did not care for it and moved on hastily. Those with him however fell upon the pearls and corals, their thoughts now turning from the Sultan to the treasure. None followed the Sultan… except for Iyāz.
>
> Looking back, the Sultan saw him and beholding Iyāz, his face like a flower blooming with delight, asked him, 'what booty have you brought along O Iyāz?'
>
> 'None,' said Iyāz, 'I hurried after you, preferring Your service to treasures and bounties!'

The poet Sa'di then says:

If you look to your friend for his favours,
You are attached to yourself not to your friend.
A breach of the Way it was if the saints
Desired of God anything other than God!

The Validity of ‘Irfān in Qur’ān

There are numerous āyāt of the Qur’ān that encourage people to embark on a journey of self-discovery and the ma’rifah of Allāh. We list a few just as a sample:

﴿... فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ...﴾

...so whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allāh!

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:115

﴿فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ ...﴾

Remember Me, and I will remember you...

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:152

﴿وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ...﴾

When My servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed nearmost. I answer the supplicant’s call when he calls Me.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:186

﴿فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي ...﴾

So when I have proportioned him (i.e. man) and breathed into him of My spirit...

- Surah al-Hijr, 15:29

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لاَ شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلاَ غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾

Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp—the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star - lit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil almost lights up, though fire should not touch it. Light upon light. Allāh guides to His Light whomever He wishes. Allāh draws parables for mankind, and Allāh has knowledge of all things.

- Surah an-Nur, 24:35

﴿... وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ﴾

...and We are nearer to him (i.e. man) than his jugular vein.

- Surah Qāf, 50:16

﴿هُوَ الأَوَّلُ وَالآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ...﴾

He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden...

- Surah al-Hadid, 57:3

﴿وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا. فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا. قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا. وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا﴾

(I swear) by the soul and Him who fashioned it, and inspired it (to distinguish between) its virtues and vices: one who purifies it (i.e. the soul) is felicitous, and one who betrays it fails.

- Surah ash-Shams, 91:7-10

And the list of verses goes on. All such āyāt arouse our curiosity and desire to look deeper into our selves and ask questions such as: Who am I? How did I get here? Who created me? How can I know God better? And so on.

Similarly, there are numerous ahādith that not only validate but actually encourage us to understand Tawhid deeply and realize who Allāh is (i.e. gain ma'rifah). Not through the mind and its logical deductions and philosophical arguments alone, but through purifying the heart and making this purification process a 'journey' towards Allāh so that He is known directly through personal experience and what is called an 'unveiling' (*kashf*). Below we present a very small sample of such ahādith.

The Validity of 'Irfān in Hadith

1. A very popular hadith al-qudsi, well-known amongst the 'Urafā as "Hadith Qurb al-Nawāfil" states:

   Rasulullāh (s) has said that Allāh (s.w.t) says: 'When My slave seeks to attain closeness (*qurb*) to Me through non-mandatory acts of worship (*nawāfil*) and good deeds, I fall in love with him. And when I love him, I become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks and his hand with which he grasps.'[11]

2. And it is reported in al-Kāfi that one day after performing his dawn prayers, Rasulullāh (s) saw a weak and lean young man whose colour was pale, whose

[11] Shahid Mutahhari, *Light Within Me*, p. 24.

eyes were sunken and who could only balance himself with difficulty. Rasulullāh (s) asked him who he was and he said, 'I carry conviction (yaqin).'

'What is the sign of your conviction?' asked Rasulullāh (s) and the young man said, 'It is my conviction that grieves me and keeps me awake during the night (in worship) and thirsty during the day (in fasting). It has made me oblivious of everything in the world. I see as if the Throne of Allāh has been set up for the accounting of deeds and the inhabitants of Paradise enjoying themselves while the inmates of Hell are being punished. Even now, it is as if I can hear the roar of the flames of Hellfire.'

Rasulullāh (s) turned to his companions and remarked, 'This is man whose heart Allāh has illumined with the light of faith.' Then he turned to the young man and said, 'Keep up this state of yours and do not lose it.'

The young man asked Rasulullāh (s) to pray for him to attain martyrdom and he was killed in a battle soon after.

Note: This incident shows us that if 'Irfān or the practical striving to know Allāh (s.w.t) was wrong, then Rasulullāh (s) would have condemned the young man.

3. Imām Ali ('a) said in a sermon: 'Certainly, Allāh, the glorified, has made His remembrance the light of hearts which hear despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness, and become submissive with its help despite unruliness. In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been individuals with whom Allāh - precious are His bounties - spoke in whispers through their conscience and intellects.'[12]

   Note: These words of Amir al-Mu'minin (a') show how the heart is the organ of receptivity to truth and knowing Allāh, and not the mind. Even one who is blind, deaf or mute can know Allāh as long as he or she has a heart and it is purified. It is beautiful that Allāh and His remembrance is accessible to all His creation and can never be taken away from them. Whether one is male or female, free or imprisoned, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, able-bodied or handicapped… in every circumstance, Allāh and His remembrance is accessible. Such that sometimes one even hears a child or one who is mentally-handicapped glorifying Allāh. This, so that, no one can say on the Day of Judgement that they were unable to journey to Allāh because they were poor or illiterate or imprisoned or handicapped, and so on.

4. In another sermon, Imām Ali ('a) is reported to have said, 'He (the faithful) revives his intellect and mortifies his self, until his body becomes lean and his coarseness turns into refinement. Then an effulgence of extreme brightness shines forth for illuminating the path before him, opening all the doors and

[12] Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 222.

leading him straight to the gate of safety and the (permanent) abode. His feet, carrying his body, become fixed in the position of safety and comfort on account of that which engages his heart and on having won the good pleasure of his Lord.'[13]

Note: Observe once again how, Tawhid, attaining of realization, enlightenment and even salvation is attained by purifying one's self and polishing the heart. Of course it is not simply devotion and worship. The attainment of knowledge through Qur'ān, hadith and deep reflection are a necessary means towards the ma'rifah of Allāh. But ultimately it comes about through direct experience and an unveiling (*kashf*) rather than a rational process of philosophical arguments. Only in this way is one completely convinced of the truth and beyond any doubt regarding Allāh and the Real World to come.

Terminologies in 'Irfān

The following are some terms we may come across in relation to 'Irfān.

Sayr wa Suluk. This is commonly translated as 'wayfaring'. It refers to the actual spiritual journeying that one chooses to undertake and all the stages one encounters in that journey.

Sufism. Some people like to say 'Irfān is to the Shi'ah what to Sufism is to the Sunni. Both terms have, however, been used by both groups interchangeably. The Shi'ah have tried to avoid associating themselves with the term 'Sufism' because often Sufism is identified by organized groups following a particular leader and some Sufi groups having been known to practice extreme rituals that have no basis in Islām. Some Sufi groups have also promoted a particular lifestyle, dressing or behaving in a particular manner, growing their hair, wearing rosaries around their necks, giving up social life or earning a living, and so on. The Shi'ah insist that there is no 'Sufism' in the madhhab of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) because the same Imāms from whom we take our theology ('aqidah) and jurisprudence (fiqh) are also our spiritual guides. We shall look at Sufism in more detail in the last two Aqāid lessons of this Book when discussing Sects in Islām.

Shari'ah, Tariqah, Haqiqah. In the language of mystics (*'urafā*), shari'ah is the exoteric or outer dimension of Islām i.e. its laws. Tariqah is the esoteric or inner dimension of Islām. It is the spiritual path that one follows by understanding the wisdom behind the shari'ah and acting on it sincerely. For example, one who follows shari'ah only, prays salāh in a series of standing, bowing and prostrating. One who follows the tariqah as well, is as concerned about his or her heart standing, bowing and prostrating before Allāh as he or she is concerned about the outer body. And

[13] Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 220.

Haqiqah is simply the Truth and the core of Islām that one seeks to reach after following the Shari'ah and Tariqah.

In other words, shari'ah is the husk and tariqah is the kernel. And in comparison, tariqah is the husk and haqiqah is the kernel; which is why some mystics refer to Haqiqah or the ultimate truth of Tawhid as "the kernel of the kernel".

The first condition of embarking on the journey of 'Irfān is of course that one must follow the shar'iah to the letter and neither skip any wājibat nor indulge in muharramāt. 'Irfān is a duty on all but it is not an alternative to following the rules of Islām. It is responding to the Call of Allāh within the framework of the laws of Islām but with greater devotion and sincerity. One cannot be 'spiritual' without following the shari'ah. To explain with an analogy: Shari'ah is the ship. Tariqah is the ocean. Haqiqah is the Great Pearl that lies in the middle of the ocean. It is impossible to get to the Great Pearl without both the Shari'ah and the Tariqah.

Project Idea

Using at least (but not limited to) three Qur'ān verses and three ahādith from the Qur'ān and Hadith references below, write an essay arguing that in the opinion of Islām, it is the heart that knows truth beyond doubt and not the mind. The mind is a tool and means to help direct our contemplation but ultimately conviction can only come from the heart.

Remember: You don't need to quote the entire Qur'ān verse that you choose to use. You can quote only the parts of it that are relevant to your essay.

You will require an English translation of the Qur'ān to look up the verses. It is recommended that you glance at the translation of every verse of Qur'ān in the list below before deciding which three (or more) verses you will use in the essay.

Qur'ān References:

Al-Baqarah, 2:74	Al-i Imrān, 3:8	Al-Anfāl, 8:24
Al-A'rāf, 7:179	Ar-Ra'd, 13:28	Ash-Shu'arā, 26:88-89
Ghāfir, 40:35	Muhammad, 47:24	Mutaffifin, 83:14

Hadith References:

In a hadith al-Qudsi, Allāh says: 'Neither the heavens nor the earth can contain Me. But the heart of a faithful (mu'min) contains Me.'

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'The heart of a believer is the throne of the Merciful.'

Rasulullāh (s): ‘Allāh, the Most High, has vessels (or ‘containers’) in the world. Behold! They are the hearts. So the ones most loved by Allāh, and the purest of them and most solid are the ones that are most affectionate and loving to their brethren, the purest from sins and the most solidly rooted in the Essence (dhāt) of Allāh.’

Rasulullāh (s): ‘Allāh, the Glorious and Most High, does not look at your faces or your wealth. He looks at your hearts and your actions.’

Imām Ali (‘a): ‘The hearts are receptacles. So the best of them are the most receptive.’

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a): ‘The status of the heart (*qalb*) to the body is like that of the Imām to the people.’

Lesson 7-8
Sects in Islám

All Muslims believe there is no god but Allāh and Muhammad (s) is His Messenger. All Muslims pray five times a day towards the Ka'bah. All Muslims believe in the Qur'ān as the final revelation from Allāh, and so on. But there are also some important differences between various groups of Muslims. The major groups or sects in Islām are broadly divided into the Shi'ah Muslims and the Sunni Muslims.

One who understands Islām as the religion of Allāh chosen for the human race, is still faced with the decision of which sect of Islām to follow. Sometimes a new Muslim may even get frustrated with all the different groups in Islām and say, 'I am just a Muslim, neither a Shi'ah nor a Sunni!' But of course this does not help him or her because some of the differences between the Muslim sects are quite important, as we shall see.

Shi'ah and Sunni Differences

The reason why sects formed in Islām is because after the passing away of Rasulullāh (s), many different opinions began to form and each group promoted its own opinions and came to be identified with a name for their own 'sect'.

In matters of belief and the law, most Muslims simply followed local scholars that they looked up to and whose views the rulers and governments of their times encouraged, promoted or at least tolerated. This is what we see in all ages, even today. Most people are occupied with earning their living and go about their daily chores, simply following along with the culture and ideology they are born into. In terms of obeying the law, they simply go along with the laws and rules of the country they live in, even if they don't agree with all of its laws. Very few people speak out against the wrongdoings of a government or their community and when they do, they are quickly labelled as 'fanatics', 'rebels', 'renegades' and essentially trouble-makers and outcasts.

We, the Shi'ah Ithnā Ashari believe that Rasulullāh (s) did not pass away without appointing a successor. Rather, he declared Imām Ali ('a) as his successor on many occasions. We also believe that Rasulullāh (s) himself, on numerous occasions, mentioned words like "Ali and his Shi'ah" and therefore neither the title "Shi'ah" of Ali nor the loyal following of Imām Ali ('a) is an innovation in Islām. For example:

It is reported in several Sunni sources of hadith and tafsir, from Ibn Abbās that when the verse, '*Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds - it is they who are the best of creatures (khayr al-bariyya)*'[14] was revealed, Rasulullāh (s) said to Imām

[14] Surah al-Bayyinah, 98:7

Ali (‘a), ‘It is you and your Shi’ah (that are being referred to in this verse), on the Day of Judgement, pleased with Allāh and He pleased with you [all].’[15]

The Shi’ah therefore insist that they are not a later formation nor are they a breakaway sect in Islām; rather they are the best of Muslims, loyal to the Household (Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)) of Rasulullāh (s) as per the instruction of Rasulullāh (s) in his famous Hadith ath-Thaqalayn.

In contrast to this, the word ‘Sunni’ did not exist in Islām until much later. During the early years of Islām, the majority of the Muslims simply followed along silently with whatever the rulers and their tribal leaders advocated. Those who remained loyal to the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) were called ‘Shi’at Ali’. Later when Mu’āwiya and his son Yazid ruled the Muslims, the division became more defined and people spoke of being “Shi’at Ali” vs. “Shi’at Mu’āwiya”, or Alawi vs. Umawi. It was only much later on, during the reign of the Banu Abbās when the government began officially promoting certain schools of law and adopting specific madhāhib (schools of law) that the rulers and their governments began calling themselves “Ahl as-Sunnah” (meaning the followers of the Sunnah of the Prophet (s)). The idea was to promote the belief that anyone who complied with them was a part of the orthodox or original Islām and anyone else, such as the Shi’ah of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) who opposed them, were ‘renegades’ (rāfidi) and so on.

Besides the few years that Imām Ali (‘a) held power as the Caliph, the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and their Shi’ah have never held political authority. This means the ‘official’ history of Islām was always written with a bias against the Shi’ah. It is only in modern times where individual countries like Iran and Iraq can be talked of as being a Shi’ah government.

The purpose of studying the differences between the Shi’ah and the Sunni is not to promote division and hate. Rather it is to understand our own faith and why we, who call ourselves the Shi’ah Ithnā Ashari, follow the School (madhhab) of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and not any other school or sect. Unless we know our history, we will neither value what we have nor will we have a clue on how to preserve it for posterity.

Theological Differences

Theology is called *‘ilm al-kalām* or simply *kalām* in Islām. It is a science that discusses and debates all matters of belief (usul or ‘aqidah) and in particular the differences of opinion in matters of belief between the various sects (madhāhib) in Islām. Muslim theologians (i.e. those who engage in kalām) are called *mutakallimun*.

The Muslim scientist and scholar al-Farābi (d. 339 AH / 950 CE) for example, defined kalām as ‘a science that enables a person to support specific beliefs and actions laid

[15] Ibn Mardawayh, *Manāqib Ali*, hadith 578-581; Suyuti, *Durr al-Manthur*, v. 6 p. 379; Ibn Hajar, *Sawāiq al-Muhriqa*, p. 161; as well as other sources.

down by the Legislators of religion and to refute all opinions contradicting them.' And Ibn Khaldun (d. 807 AH / 1404 CE) defined kalām as, 'the science that involves arguing with rational proofs in defence of the articles of faith and refuting innovators who deviate from the beliefs of early Muslims and Muslim orthodoxy.'[16]

This means 'Ilm al-Kalām discusses matters ranging from the Being and Attributes of God to matters relating to Prophethood, Imāmah and Ma'ād. A major cause of Muslim division into sects stems from their differing views regarding the matters that are discussed under kalām.

It is important to note however that despite its importance, 'ilm al-kalām does not hold a central place in Islām as it does in Christianity. Theology has, over the centuries, played a profound role in the religious and spiritual understand of Christians whereas in Islām it has played a more peripheral role. As well, much of what is discussed under 'theology' in Christianity is to be found in Islāmic Philosophy (as we shall see in Lesson 7).

It is true that kalām is very important to understand certain aspects of Islāmic thought and how sects formed in Islām, but the deepest spiritual and intellectual expressions of Islām are to be found in *falsafa* (philosophy) and '*irfān* (gnosis) and not *kalām*.[17]

This is important to note because the Shi'ah are often criticized for not having their own 'kalām' until much later; and even of simply borrowing and taking from the Sunni Mu'tazilite kalām after it was dying out and was replaced by the Sunni Ash'arite theology. As we shall see, the Mu'tazilites were supportive of the use of rationality in understanding theological matters and the Ash'arites were not. The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) always encouraged the use of rationality and the intellect. It is therefore natural that one might see similarities between the all but extinct Mu'tazilite theology and the Shi'ah theology. But the differences between them are also significant and for the latter, it comes from the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) only.

Early Kalām

Traditionally, Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a) is credited with having established the science of kalām in Islām and his sermons in Nahj al-Balāgha contain the first rational proofs of the unity of Allāh (tawhid), outside the proofs in the Qur'ān and hadith. This in itself proves that the Shi'ah did not take their understanding of usul or kalām from the Mu'tazilites even if they never felt the need to put their theology in writing until much later in their history.

At first, Muslims felt the need to engage in kalām only as a protection and defence of Islām. The theology of other religions – especially Christianity – challenged the young

[16] Nasr & Leaman, *History of Islāmic Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 75.
[17] Nasr, *Islāmic Spirituality*, vol. 2, chp. 22, p. 396.

faith of Islām. Added to this, texts on Greek philosophy were being translated into Arabic and raising new questions for Muslim scholars.

As well, the rapid spread of Islām brought diverse groups into the fold of the Islāmic community and therefore necessitated a clear definition of the creed to prevent confusion. Before that, Muslims were mostly concerned with Divine Law (shari'ah) and its practice but these challenges forced the creation of theologians who could respond to external challenges that questioned the general understanding of God and other theological matters, which in turn forced the theologians to look at the Qur'ān and hadith more deeply.

The Mu'tazilites

The first systematic school of kalām grew from a circle of traditional scholars of Qur'ān and hadith in the second (AH)/eighth (CE) century and came to be known as the Mu'tazilite school. Its founder Wāsil b. 'Ata (d. 131 AH/748 CE) was a student of the famous hadith and Sufi teacher Hasan al-Basri. But he separated from his master and established his own school in Basra. His teacher, Hasan al-Basri, is said to have remarked, "*i'tazala 'anna Wāsil*" ('Wāsil has withdrawn himself from us') and from his word "i'tazala" is said to have come the name Mu'tazilites (i.e. 'the Withdrawers').

The Mu'tazilites were seen as free-thinkers and rationalists. They dominated the scene in Iraq for over a century and created an imposing theological school that emphasized the use of reason and the importance of freewill. In fact, their main flaw was that they gave preference to reasoning even above revelation (i.e. the Qur'ān).

This lasted until the time of the Abbāsi Caliph al-Ma'mun and in the early third (AH)/ninth (CE) century, the Mu'tazilites began to decline and they were replaced by the Ash'arite school of kalām, strongly supported by al-Ma'mun's successor al-Mutawakkil.

The Mu'tazilites did not die out complete though. They continued to survive in small groups and in recent times there has been some revival of their ideas.

The Mu'tazilites taught that God is unknowable to a point that God is almost seen as an abstract idea. Their aim was to oppose any notion of anthropomorphism (that God has a form or a physical being) and to this end, they emphasized that even the Speech of God (i.e. the Qur'ān) is a creation just like other creations. This last belief came to be a serious matter for the Ash'arites and much blood was shed between Muslims over the issue of whether the Qur'ān was eternal in its essence (the Ash'arite view) or whether it was created (the Mu'tazilite and also the Shi'ah view).

On the matter of Justice ('adālah), the Mu'tazilites emphasized that God's justice and promise in the Qur'ān demands that He rewards the good and punishes the evil, to the point that He cannot do otherwise; and those in Hellfire cannot be taken out of it

nor can they benefit from any intercession. In opposition to this, the Ash'arites later reacted strongly and went to the other extreme of saying, if God wills, He can and He will put all the righteous in Hell and all the evil in Paradise and that man's action do not earn him the right to Paradise. The Ash'arites went further to say that 'justice' as it is understood by humans does not apply to God. Whatever God does is just even if He admits the prophets and their successors in Hell and Fir'aun and his likes in Paradise. The Shi'ah, taking from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), argued that there is a difference between what God 'can do' and what He 'will do'. It is true that God *can* do as He pleases but God as well, takes pride in the Qur'ān that He never breaks His promise and therefore it is wrong to say that He may cause the righteous to enter Hell or that 'whatever He does is just even putting the righteous in Hellfire.'

The Mu'tazilites also taught that man is completely free and that God does not interfere in creation. Everything is determined by cause and effect. The Ash'arites opposed this greatly and again, in extreme reaction, argued that man is completely bound by God so much so that God predestines every action. Every good deed and every sin is willed and committed by God. But man is the puppet through whom this action takes place. And because man 'acquires' (*yaksibu*) the action, therefore he can be punished for what occurs through him.

The Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) naturally opposed this (as we have discussed in detail in Book 10) and Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) in particular taught the principle of "*al-amr baynal amrayn*" (the matter is between the two matters) meaning neither are the Mu'tazilites right (that man is completely free) nor are the Ash'arites true (that Allāh forces people to act in good or evil). It would be unjust for Allāh to punish a person for an act He commits and it also makes no sense that Allāh should warn and ask people to refrain from sins (in the Qur'ān) if they have no option but to do what He intends. In the Shi'ah understanding therefore, man is free in his actions but many matters such as his birth, what he earns, when he dies, his sustenance, etc. are not entirely in his hands but decreed by Allāh. Man must learn to surrender to Allāh and be pleased with Allāh's decree and then act freely to prove this surrendering and therefore earn eternal bliss.

In conclusion then, the Mu'tazilites were the first group of Muslim thinkers to apply rational arguments systematically to various questions of religion and it is the development of a rational theology that they are most known for in the history of Islāmic thought. In this way, they influenced all later theological debates including the discussions of the Sunni Ash'arites and the Shi'ah Muslims.

The Ash'arites

During the third (AH)/ninth (CE) century, after the reign of Ma'mun, who made the Mu'tazilite doctrine compulsory, the traditional jurists (*fuqaha*) and traditionists (muhaddithun), especially the followers of Ahmad b. Hanbal, opposed all rational proofs for the tenets of faith. Muslims were asking to accept the doctrines of faith 'without asking how' (*bilā kayf*).

Naturally, this extreme reaction against the rational tendencies of the Mu'tazilite kalām could not last indefinitely. The Qur'ān itself emphasized the use of the intellect ('aql) and invited people to ponder on its verses. This would be impossible without the use of rationality and 'asking how'. Those who saw themselves as leaders of orthodox Islām were therefore forced to allow the use of rationality in theological discussions – even if it was within defined limits - rather than banning it altogether.

And it was this task that Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari attempted to undertake and thus he came to be known as the founder of the Ash'arite theology that the whole Sunni world subscribes to today.

Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari was born in Basra around 260 AH/873 CE and he died in Baghdad around 330 AH/941 CE. Until the age of 40, he was a student of the famous Basrean Mu'tazilite al-Jubbā'i but then he turned against the Mu'tazilite doctrines and 'repented' seeking to return to what he saw as the authentic teachings of the Qur'ān. He is said to have gone to the main mosque of Basra and publicly declared his repentance as follows:

> He who knows me, know who I am. And he who does not know me, let him know that I am Abul Hasan Ali al-Ash'ari; that I used to maintain that the Qur'ān is created, that the eyes of men shall not see God, and that the creatures create their actions. Lo! I repent that I have been a Mu'tazilite. I renounce these opinions and I take the engagement to refute the Mu'tazilites and expose their depravity.[18]

Some of the essential views of the Ash'arites can be derived from the words of al-Ash'ari himself: that the Qur'ān is in its essence as eternal as God; that people will be able to see Allāh on the Day of Judgement and that God is responsible for all the actions of man.

One of the most famous doctrines of the Ash'arites (which was later expanded on by famous Ash'arites like al-Ghazāli) was the rejection of causality. What this means is that, for the Ash'arites, nothing has an independent nature to cause anything. Only God is the cause of everything. For example, fire does not burn because it is in its nature to do so but because God has willed it. Tomorrow He could will otherwise and as a result fire would cease to burn. There is no such thing as 'the nature of fire', they argued. What in fact appears to us as cause and effect – for example, fire causing a piece of cotton to burn – is nothing but a habit of the mind ('ādah), because we have constantly seen fire being brought near a piece of cotton and then the cotton being in flames. God is the only cause; it is His Will that makes fire burn the cotton. Miracles are in fact nothing other than breaking of this habit of mind.

Then to prove this theory, the Ash'arites backed it with verses from the Qur'ān and said, 'do you not see how when Nabi Ibrāhim ('a) was thrown in fire, it did not burn him because God did not will it?'

[18] Ibid., p. 400.

Our response to the Ash'arites is that this very same incident in the Qur'ān proves that Allāh has given everything its own nature and ability to cause things. Their ability to cause is of course by Allāh's Will that He can retract at any time, but it doesn't prove they don't have any ability to affect another thing. Look at the verse where Allāh commands the fire not to burn Nabi Ibrāhim ('a):

﴿قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ﴾

We said, 'O fire! Be cool and safe for Ibrāhim!'

- Surah al-Anbiya, 21:69

Notice that Allāh commands, 'O Fire! Be cool...' If the cause of fire burning was Allāh alone, then why would He order the fire not to burn Nabi Ibrāhim ('a)?

In summary then, if we imagine God's Will to be a vertical cause and all actions of creation (including humans) as horizontal causes that bisect the Vertical Cause, then we could say that Ash'arite kalām sought to dissolve all horizontal causes and deny their existence. It is no wonder than that Ash'arites strongly opposed Islāmic philosophy, which seeks to know the cause and nature of things leading ultimately to the First or Ultimate Cause (i.e. Allāh).

The famous Ash'arite scholar al-Ghazāli studied philosophy and then wrote against it his well-known *tahāfut al-falāsifa (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)*. Later, the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) responded to al-Ghazāli and wrote a rejoinder calling his work *tahāfut al-tahāfut (Incoherence of the Incoherence)*. Similarly, one of the most famous Ash'arite scholars and exegists of Qur'ān, Fakhr ad-Din ar-Rāzi wrote criticisms against the Muslim philosopher Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and his criticisms were counter-challenged by the Muslim philosopher Nāsir ad-Din at-Tusi in his work *ishārāt wal tanbihāt*.

The Ash'arites did not contribute to the flowering of Islāmic science either, because most Islāmic scientists were also philosophers and very few of them were Ash'arite *mutakallimun* (theologians).

One of the contributions of the later Ash'arites however was the merging of Ash'arite theology with Sufism. At a time when traditional 'ulama were at odds with the mystics, al-Ghazāli (a strong proponent of Ash'arite theology as well as Sufism) and others were able to reconcile the two parts and show how they can co-exist. This in itself is remarkable – how despite its 'anti-intellectualism' the Ash'arite view not only became the prevalent theology in the Sunni world but also combined (in certain aspects) with Sufism at whose heart lies gnosis (ma'rifah) and illuminative knowledge (more on this in the Lesson 7).

In more modern times, Sunni (Ash'arite) scholars like Muhammad Abduh (d. 1323 AH/1905 CE) and Muhammad Iqbāl (d. 1357 AH/1938 CE) have given greater importance to the use of reason in their works, thus reviving some Mu'tazilite perspectives.

The Shi'ah Kalām

For the Shi'ah, the dominant Ash'arite view that opposes the use of rationality in theological matters is seen as an impediment to acquiring Divine knowledge. It goes against the very basic teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) that encourage deep intellection of the Qur'ān and hadith and understanding Tawhid and its branches beyond just the literal translation of Qur'ān verses and hadith.

Based on the Prophetic hadith, 'I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its Gate', the Shi'ah argue that if true understanding of Tawhid lies in the City (i.e. with Rasulullāh (s)) and access to this treasure of divine knowledge comes through the Gate (Imām Ali ('a) and by extension the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)) then the Ash'arite doctrines of opposing the use of rationality are the 'walls of the city' that act as an impediment to the City.

Indeed the dominant non-Shi'ah view has been that any interpretation of the Qur'ān is 'off limits' and discussing and debating theological and philosophical matters are wrong and an innovation (*bid'ah*). The famous Imām Malik b. Anas[19] (d. 179 AH/795 CE) who died even before al-Ash'ari was born, is reported to have said, 'Beware of innovations... those who talk about the names and attributes of God, His Word, His Knowledge and His Power, and do not keep silent about things which the Companions of the Prophet (s) and their followers have kept silence.'[20]

And when he was asked to explain verses of Qur'ān such as '*Indeed your Lord is Allāh, who created the heavens and the earth in six days* ***and then settled on the Throne...***' (Al-A'rāf, 7:54), as to how exactly God 'settled' Himself on the Throne, Imām Malik b. Anas responded by saying, 'We know He settled Himself on the Throne. How it occurred is not understandable. The belief in it is obligatory and asking questions about it is an innovation (*bid'ah*)!'[21]

In other words, Imām Malik (and later on the Ash'arites) believed that instead of interpreting verses of Qur'ān that do not make literal sense, we should simply accept them 'as is' and remain silent without asking how (*bilā kayf*).

The Shi'ah on the other hand have argued that if God did not want us to understand such verses, then what was the point of revealing them? The reason for not knowing the answer to such questions is not because there is none but because of turning away from the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) who are the true inheritors of the knowledge of Rasulullāh (s) and the Qur'ān. It is concerning them that Allāh revealed, '*...ask the People of the Reminder (ahl adh-dhikr) if you do not know...*' (an-Nahl, 16:43).

Ash'arite scholars like Ghazāli and Suyuti lamented that Muslims were plagued with theological and philosophical concerns only because of the infiltration of Greek philosophy into Islām. But this is not entirely true. We know from at least one report

[19] Founder of the Maliki madhhab.
[20] Nasr & Leaman, *History of Islāmic Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 71.
[21] Ibid, p. 106.

that Rasulullāh (s) himself came out one day and found a group of Muslims discussing the subject of predestination (*qadar*).[22]

Furthermore, the Qur'ān discusses matters of law (*fiqh*) in less than 600 verses out of it's over 6600 verses. Most of the Qur'ān explains matters of aqāid and kalām such as the unity of Allāh, prophethood, the refutation of idol worship and polytheism, the Hereafter, and so on.

From a Shi'ah perspective, there are numerous examples of atheists and philosophers who debated theological matters with the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Nahj al-Balāgha has numerous examples of Imām Ali ('a) discussing tawhid in deep philosophical terms. The theological debates of Imām al-Bāqir ('a), Imām as-Sādiq ('a), Imām ar-Ridā ('a) as well as other Imāms with the scholars of other faiths are widely recorded in the Shi'ah books of hadith.

It is true that Rasulullāh (s) and the Imāms ('a) did not encourage people to ask too much about certain matters like predestination or the Hour of Judgement; but this was not to discourage curiosity or learning. It was because the matter was beyond the understanding of the people at the time. When Rasulullāh (s) was asked by a companion, 'when is the Hour of Judgement?' he replied, 'what have you prepared for it?' In other words, Rasulullāh (s) wanted him to realize is that if he has prepared for it, then 'when' is not important and if he hasn't prepared for it, then again, knowing 'when' will not be of any use to him, given that he could die at any moment.

Rasulullāh (s) himself engaged in theological debates, such as with the Christian delegation from Najrān regarding Nabi Isa ('a), after which the Ayāh of Mubāhala (3:61) was revealed. These debates, recorded in many tafāsir works, clearly show Rasulullāh (s) arguing with logic and reasoning as to why God cannot have a son and why Jesus was human and not divine.

The Shi'ah and the Ash'arites also differ on the issue of Imāmah and concepts related to them but these have all been discussed in previous books. For the Shi'ah understanding of Imāmah and its necessity, see Book 8. For the concept of Infallibility ('ismah), see Book 7. For the subject of Intercession (shafā'ah), see Book 8 and for the matter of Intermediaries (wasila), see Book 10. Regarding the possibility of a Prophet or Imām having hidden knowledge ('ilm al-ghayb), see Book 9. In all these matters, the Shi'ah believe in and uphold these concepts while the Ash'arites do not or are not unanimous in their belief on them.

It is often said that the early Shi'ah thinkers were mostly concerned with hadith, tafsir (Qur'ānic commentary) and fiqh (jurisprudence) and that Shi'ah kalām did not develop until much later when Shaykh Mufid (d. 413 AH/1022 CE) developed Shi'ah kalām after taking from the Mu'tazilites. As mentioned earlier, this is not true.

[22] Ibid, p. 71.

Shaykh Mufid himself has refuted the claim that Shi'ah theology was copied from the Mu'tazilites in his book *Awā'il al-Maqāl*.[23]

What is true however is that the Shi'ah did not occupy themselves with kalām as did the others because rather than treating it as a separate subject, they discussed the issues of kalām under their philosophical (falsafi) and hadith works. In fact, some of the greatest Shi'ah theologians were philosophers and experts in other sciences.

For example, even though Shaykh al-Mufid is regarded as one of the earliest Shi'ah scholars to discuss kalām independently, a systematic treatise on Shi'ah Ithna Ashari kalām is said to have first been written by Nāsir ad-Din at-Tusi (d. 672 AH/1273 AH), who was a celebrated mathematician and philosopher. And though he was a scientist, Tusi's work *Tajrid al-'Itiqād* rapidly became a standard theological text; more than a hundred commentaries have been written on it. The most famous commentary is the *Kashf al-Murād* of Allama Hilli (d. 726 AH/1326 CE), who is the most notable Shi'ah mutakallim (theologian) after Tusi.

These works clearly show how the Shi'ah defer from the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites in their theological views. But as we shall see in Lesson 7, many of these issues are best discussed under philosophy. Indeed, to understand Shi'ah kalām thoroughly, one has to study the philosophical works of the Shi'ah.

An example of issues in kalām that necessitate a study of philosophy is the Shi'ah confirmation of the reality of horizontal causality (that the Ash'arites deny). Another example is the Shi'ah rejection of all 'hadith' that portray God in anthropomorphic terms.

The Shi'ah pride themselves in upholding the purest form of Tawhid (as taught by the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)) and this in itself is impossible to discuss without engaging in philosophy. Perhaps it is because the two sciences are so intertwined that Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kāshāni (d. 1091 AH/1680 CE) and Abd ar-Razzāq Lāhiji (d. 1071 AH/1660 CE) - the most notable students of the famous Shi'ah philosopher, Sadr ad-Din Shirāzi (Mulla Sadra) (d. 1050 AH/1640 CE) – are regarded by some to be more scholars of kalām than of falsafa.[24]

Shi'ah Divisions

The term 'Shi'ah' is not used exclusively for the followers of the twelve Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Those who follow up to the 4th Imām ('a) and then follow his son Zayd are known as Zaydi Shi'ah. And those who stop at the 6th Imām ('a) and then follow his son Ismāil are known as Ismāili Shi'ahs and they are further divided into the Dawoodi Bohra Shi'ahs and the Nizari Ismāili (or Aga Khani) Shi'ahs.

[23] Ibid., p. 123.
[24] Nasr, *Islāmic Spirituality*, vol. 2, chp. 22, p. 409.

In all these lessons, when we mention the word, 'Shi'ah' we do not mean any of the above sects but rather we mean the Shi'ah Ithnā Ashari who follow the twelve Imāms and believe in the final Imām as being the Mahdi ('atfs) who is in ghaybah.

The words "Ithnā Ashar" means 'Twelve' in Arabic and some people therefore also refer to us as 'the Twelver Shi'ah'. The Shi'ah Ithnā Ashari form the majority amongst all sects referred to as 'Shi'ah'.

All Muslims acknowledge that Rasulullāh (s) declared that the Imāms and leaders after him will be twelve and they will all be from the Quraysh. All Muslims also believe that Rasulullāh (s) said, 'I leave behind two important things: the Book of Allāh and my Ahl al-Bayt. If you hold on to them, you will never go astray after me.' (Hadith ath-Thaqalayn). But no Muslim sect follows the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in all matters of Islām as well as believes in precisely twelve Imāms, except for the Shi'ah Ithna Ashari Muslims.

The Shi'ah Ithna Ashari are also divided into the Usuli and Akhbāri, the majority being the Usuli Shi'ah Ithna Ashari.

Akhbāri Shi'ah Ithna Ashari

The Akhbāri Shi'ah Ithna Ashari rely on hadith (also called *akhbār*) only for their laws. They reject the following of a mujtahid who is not infallible (ma'sum). Thus they are opposed to taqlid and marja'iya as found among the Usuli. Today the Akhbāris are found mostly in India, Bahrain and some parts of southern Iraq and western Iran.

But the differences between the Usuli and Akhbāri are not limited to fiqh matters only. Amongst their differences in beliefs, the Akhbāri regard the Kutub al-Arba'a (Four Shi'ah Sources of Hadith) to be all authentic while the Usuli Shi'ah Ithna Ashari do not. The Akhbāri believe in Tahreef of Qur'ān i.e. that the Qur'ān in our hands today is not the complete Qur'ān and that the original complete Qur'ān is with Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs). We the Usuli believe the present Qur'ān is the complete, unchanged revelation of Allāh. The Akhbāri also believe that declaring "Aliyyun Waliyullah" is an obligatory (wājib) part of the Kalimah while the Usuli do not consider it to be wājib in order for one to be accepted as a Muslim.

Lesson 9-10
Sects in Islám (cont'd)

Jurisprudence Differences

By jurisprudence (fiqh) we mean the laws of practice (or what is called the Shari'ah) in Islām. In the early decades of Islām after Rasulullāh (s), the Muslims continued to practice Islām based on what they had learnt from Rasulullāh (s). Around the time of Imām Ali Zayn al-Abidin ('a), Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) and Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), many of the companions of Rasulullāh (s) had died and Islām had expanded rapidly to other lands. It therefore became necessary to preserve the shari'ah from corruption or even disappearing.

The Shi'ah simply continued following the Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in their practices just as they did in all other matters such as beliefs, Qur'ān interpretation, hadith and spirituality. And in due course, the Shi'ah madhhab also came to be known as the Ja'fari School of Law because it followed Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a), in whose times the Sunni Schools of Law began acquiring a formal name and structure.

The Sunni Muslims today follow one of four schools of law: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i or Hanbali. But this was not always the case. After Imām Ali ('a) when the Banu Umayya reigned as Kings and were not knowledgeable in Islāmic law themselves, they relied on scholars to be judges in their courts. Different cities have different 'mujtahids', each promoting their own opinion or 'school'. At one point it is believed there were almost twenty schools of law, including the school of Hasan al-Basri, the school of al-Awzāi, the school of Tabari, the school of Sufyān ath-Thawri, and so on.

The government of the time was concerned with all these unregulated schools of law cropping up and therefore most schools of law were either banned or died out, with only four of them being allowed to crystallize and survive over time.

The Four Sunni Schools of Law

Hanafi
It is the oldest of the four and was founded in Iraq by Abu Hanifa (d. 150 AH/767 CE). Abu Hanifa's real name was Nu'man b. Thābit. He was a Persian but he was born in Kufa and died in Baghdad. Abu Hanifa studied under Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) in Madina and later developed his own opinions in Islāmic law.

The Hanafi School allows deriving legal judgements and Islāmic laws based on self-opinion (ra'y) and the use of analogies (qiyās). It is therefore the most liberal and flexible of the four Sunni Madhāhib. Today, the Hanafi madhhab has the largest following in the Sunni Muslim world and it is particularly dominant in Central and Western Asia (Afghanistan to Turkey), parts of Egypt, and the Indian subcontinent. It

is basically dominant in the countries that were once a part of the Turkish Empire and in India.

Because Abu Hanifa had supported a Zaydi revolt, he was arrested and he died in prison. His followers later on ascribed to him a genealogy that made him a descendant of Persian Kings and he was regarded as a hero because he refused to serve as a religious judge (qādi) under the Umayyads. Under the Abbāsids however, his followers readily entered government service and gained favour by a willingness to accommodate the needs of the ruling princes in matters of law. Abu Yusuf (a Hanafi) who wrote a treatise on land tax became the first Supreme Judge (Qādi al-Qudāh) under the Caliph Hārun ar-Rashid, and gained official sanction for what became known as the Hanafi School of Law.[25]

Maliki

The second surviving school was founded in Madina and the Hejaz by Malik b. Anas (d. 179 AH/795 CE). Malik b. Anas was born and died in Madina. Like Abu Hanifa, he studied under Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) and later started his own school.

He was a collector of hadith but even more a supporter of the customary practices (a'māl or sunnah) of Madina, which he saw as the earliest centre of Islāmic law and government and on which he relied heavily in his approach to the Shari'ah. Unlike Abu Hanifa, he relied on the customary practices of Madina first and then on Consensus (ijmā') and Opinion (ra'y) secondarily.

Malik's famous work, Al-Muwatta ("The Path Made Smooth") is the earliest collection of Hadith and the first book of law for Sunnis. It contains his opinions and judgments and the sources he used to reach them. The Maliki madhhab is prominent today in North & West Africa (including parts of Egypt) and Arab West.

Shafi'i

This madhhab is attributed to Muhammad b. Idris ash-Shafi'i (d. 205 AH/820 CE). Shafi'i was born in Palestine and raised in Makkah. He is buried in Cairo. He studied law in Madina under Malik b. Anas and he also pursued studies in Baghdad thus becoming intimately acquainted with Hanafi law. He was therefore a student of the students of Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a).

Against Malik b. Anas's practice of depending primarily on the customary usages (sunnah or a'māl) of Madina and against Abu Hanifa's methods of deriving laws based on deductions and speculations, Shafi'i promoted the idea that the Hadith and Sunnah of Rasulullāh (s) should be the primary authority for interpreting the Qur'ānic laws and injunctions. These, he argued, were more important that analogy (qiyās) and Consensus (ijmā') in legitimizing any law.

[25] Glasse, *The New Encyclopedia of Islām*, entry on "Abu Hanifa".

Shāfi'is arrangement of the Qur'ān, hadith & sunnah, qiyās and ijmā' as jointly being the 'roots of jurisprudence' (usul al-fiqh) and the principles on which laws were to be derived, became the standard methodology that was later adopted by all the four surviving Schools of Law. This is seen as his greatest contribution.

Shafi'i did not himself found a school of law. This was done by his disciples. The Shafi'i madhhab is dominant in Malaysia, Indonesia, East Africa and the Philippines. It is also found in Egypt along with the Maliki and Hanafi sects.

Hanbali

It was founded by Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241 AH/855 CE) who carried Shāfi'is enthusiasm and trust in hadith farther than any other jurist had. He was extremely conservative and founded a rather fundamentalist school. This is perhaps why the Wahhābi school in Arabia was influenced by his thoughts.

The Hanbali School is observed only in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Technically the Wahhābi consider themselves to be 'non-imitators' or 'not attached to tradition' (*ghayr muqallidun*) and therefore answerable to no school of law at all. They instead claim to follow what they call the practice of early Islām (salafism). However, to do so corresponds to the ideal aimed at by Ahmad b. Hanbal and thus they can be said to be of his 'school'.

Conclusion

From this we can conclude:

- The four Sunni Schools of Law came about by coincidence. Any of the innumerable schools could have survived. These survived not because of any particular legitimacy but because of certain reasons such as their founder being venerated as a martyr and so on.
- The four Sunni Imāms never saw themselves as founders of any school or representatives of God's laws. It was their followers and circumstances that made them the 'founders'.
- Those followers of a madhhab who supported a caliph or government had the chance to make their madhhab legitimate and 'orthodox'. In other words, if the Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) had served the ruling princes and kings and worked for them in their courts as religious judges, then the Ja'fari madhhab would also have been accepted as a 'valid' madhhab in Sunni Islām today. And therefore we cannot ignore the politics that was involved in determining whether a particular school of law was valid in Islām or not.

Nonetheless, in time, the Sunni Muslims came to believe that one had to follow one of these four schools of law otherwise one was not a part of 'orthodox Islām' and one's acts of worship were invalid.

Yet the clear flaw with this is that the early Muslims, who were the companions (sahāba) of Rasulullāh (s) as well as the followers of the sahāba (i.e. the tābi'un) did not follow any of these schools (because they never existed!). And none of these schools are legislated by Islām (i.e. by Qur'ān or hadith). They simply represent the opinions and research of four scholars or 'mujtahids'.

Furthermore, to believe that Islām has precisely four shari'ahs only, all of which are valid simultaneously, seems convenient but not sensible. This is not the same as the case with the Shi'ah madhhab where living mujtahideen may express minor differences of opinion in the law. No Shi'ah mujtahid is permitted to express his personal opinion in the law and no one has the right to claim that only certain mujtahids are to be followed and only their views represent the true Islāmic law, even long after they are dead.

Besides, any sect making such a claim would have to have <u>one</u> School of Law only. To say there are four schools, no more no less, and all these four are 'equally correct', though their creation was a coincidence in history and has no proof of legitimacy in Qur'ān or hadith, is hard to accept. It suggests uncertainty - that we don't really know what the true law of Islām is.

The clearest criticism to such an idea is given by Imām Ali b. Ali Tālib ('a), ironically long before the formation of these sects:

> When a problem is put before anyone of them he passes judgement on it from his imagination. When exactly the same problem is placed before another of them he passes an opposite verdict. Then these judges go to the chief who had appointed them and he confirms all the verdicts, although their Allāh is one, their Prophet is one, their Book (the Qur'ān) is one.
>
> Is it that Allāh ordered them to differ and they obeyed Him? Or He prohibited them from it but they disobeyed Him? Or (is it that) Allāh sent an incomplete Faith and sought their help to complete it? Or they are His partners in the affairs, so that it is their share of duty to pronounce and He has to agree? Or is it that Allāh the Glorified sent a perfect faith but the Prophet fell short of conveying it and handing it over (to the people)? The fact is that Allāh the Glorified says:

﴿... مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ...﴾

…We have not neglected anything in the Book (Qur'ān)…

- Surah al-An'ām, 6:38[26]

[26] Sayyid ar-Radi, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 18.

Grade 12

Stream 1

Lesson Sequence: 11-19

Advanced Lessons in Akhlaq

We estimate this unit can be taught over 9 lessons.

Lesson 11
Development of Akhláq & the Faculties of the Soul

Humans have a soul and a physical body, each with its own pleasures and diseases. What harms the body is sickness and what gives it pleasure is health, well being and being in harmony with nature. The science of medicine deals with the health and maladies of the body.

The diseases of the soul consist of evil habits and addictions such as submission to lusts that degrade a human soul and lowers it to the level of beasts. The pleasures of the soul are moral and ethical values, which elevate humans to move them closer to perfection and Allāh. The science that deals with such matters is called the science of ethics (*'ilm al-akhlāq*).

Those who say humans are no different from animals in how they eat, sleep, reproduce, defecate, etc. are comparing the human *body* with that of animals. They are either assuming humans have no soul or that the real essence of a human being is the body.

The soul of a human being who has surrendered to Allāh is a mirror through which Allāh reflects His beautiful Names and Attributes in this world. The human soul is also indestructible and permanent. The body on the other hand is temporary, prone to breaking down and only able to survive in this world. It is a just a vehicle and a 'clothing' for the soul for a short while before the soul moves on to another, better and more perfect plane of existence.

A faithful (*mu'min*) stays healthy and protects his or her body not because the life of this world is better or that they fear death or would rather be here instead of the next world but because they see this life as a gift from Allāh to use to build their permanent abode. The longer they are able to stay in this body, the more they can prepare for the next world, such as in worshipping Allāh or earning a lawful living and helping others, or using their time and strength to help others. As the body is used to serve Allāh, the soul is nurtured and built stronger.

What prevents humans from building the soul is addictions. Addiction is a slavish habit of doing something that the mind believes will bring it happiness but it is engaged in it only for the pleasure with no purpose or meaningful reason. Some addictions are *harām* such as substance use (drugs, alcohol), gambling and pornography. Others are not labelled *harām* in fiqh but nonetheless prevent or slow the soul's growth, such as addiction to tea, coffee, smoking, shopping, the internet, food, sleep, games, etc.

The human mind, through its attempt to survive what it perceives as conflict, creates from infancy an illusory (mind-made) 'self' (that we call the 'ego') and that it refers to as 'I'. By the time most humans grow up, they forget their soul and don't 'listen' to it anymore, which is the voice of their real 'self'. They are busy trying to protect this illusory ego through constant seeking of pleasure and fulfilling of desires and through conflict like blaming, jealousy, anger, backbiting, fighting, accusing, etc. that the mind believes will resolve its pain and remove its fears. The mind believes that if this ego is compromised or diminished it will cease to exist (because 'I' will die).

Spiritual growth and realization of who a human really is comes from learning to let go of the ego or at least realizing the games that the mind plays and being aware every time the mind is using conflict or seeking addictions to stay alive. This realization in turn allows a human to 'connect' with nature and all of existence. And since Allāh permeates the very fabric of all existence, it allows a human to connect with Allāh and truly become Allāh's representative.

One of the philosophies of fasting in the month of Ramadan is to give a human being the chance to break away from addictions and see how it feels to be free and not enslaved by the mind's desires.

HOW FAR IS HEAVEN?
Sufi Comics
Arif & Ali
WWW.VAKIL.ORG
O IMAM ALI CAN YOU TELL US HOW FAR IS HEAVEN?
JUST TWO STEPS AWAY
WHICH TWO STEPS?
THE FIRST STEP IS ON YOUR NAFS (LOWER SELF / EGO) ...
... THE NEXT STEP IS IN HEAVEN
EGO

Whenever you feel obsessed by a hobby or anything in life, think about this. You will realize the 'real me' is asleep and it is the mind in the driver's seat using the obsession to promote and strengthen its own mind-made false 'self'. This state of the real self being asleep – what Imām Ali ('a) eludes too in the hadith, '*the people of this world are asleep, they wake up when they die*' – is called heedlessness or *ghaflah*. Waking up from *ghaflah* can be done periodically but to be awake permanently, one must let the false self or ego die. That is the meaning of true surrender to Allāh – surrendering the mind's own self-will. Hence the hadith of Rasulullāh (s) – '*die before you die*'. Meaning, let the ego die (that you can control and allow to die) before your body's physical death (that you have no control over).

Jannah is an abode of perfection. It is not that Allāh wants some to enter it and others not to. All are welcome. But only a perfect soul can survive and live in such a perfect place. Consider a person who is addicted to fear, worry, anxiety and blame. Even if you try and force them away from this habit, they will resist it and fight you because they equate giving up the habit to death. The mind believes it would rather die than give this up. But the person who is free from this habit can see how much pain and suffering the person addicted is in. Yet only the person suffering can help himself or herself by first acknowledging his or her malady and choosing to heal. Similarly, people cannot be forced into Jannah. They must choose it themselves. If they become creatures that can only live with pain, they would resist going to Jannah because they cannot relate to it.

The secret to not failing in life is to ask yourself about everything that you become passionate about and make a goal and important part of your life: why am I doing this? How does it affect my hereafter? Is it a need of my soul or an addiction through which the mind seeks to find illusory happiness?

The Immaterial Soul

We have said that unlike the body, the soul is everlasting and is therefore independent of the body. The soul survives even after the body can no longer support it and falls apart, forcing the soul to leave and move on to another existence. Seeing yourself primarily as the soul and not the body is the first step to realizing the importance of akhlāq, the importance of preparing for eternal existence and the importance of development (or purification) of the soul (*tazkiyat an-nafs*).

Lesson 12
Akhláq & the Faculties of the Soul (cont'd)

Meaning and Origin of Akhlāq

The word *akhlāq* is the plural of *khulq* that means 'nature' as in the nature of someone. It can also be translated as disposition or characteristic.

Every soul has a character or nature that comes about through repetitive practice of an action by the physical body that is tightly integrated to the soul. When an action is done repeatedly, it becomes a habit or trait (called a *malakah* in Arabic) that is impressed upon the soul. A soul then is chiselled or formed into a being – beautiful or ugly – through a multitude of *malakāt*. And this real form is what emerges on the Day of Judgement and takes residence in the infinite levels of Jannah or Jahannam, where it fits most. It 'floats' up or down to where it just rightly belongs. Sometimes a *malakah* can be helped by a person's nature and tendency but through practice and effort, weak tendencies can also be strengthened and made into a *malakah* (trait).

We could therefore say, a particular disposition (*malakah*) may appear in a human being because of one of three reasons:

1. Nature and physical makeup: Some people are naturally patient while others are touchy, moody, sensitive or hasty. Some are easily disturbed and saddened while others show greater resistance and resilience at difficulties.
2. Habit: This is formed because of unconscious continual repetition of certain acts until it emerges as a certain disposition (*malakah*).
3. Practice and conscious effort: If continued long enough it can eventually lead to the formation of a *malakah*.

Even though people have different natures, it is by no means true that humans have no choice and are compelled to act in a certain way. Training the soul does not mean killing the needs of the physical body or not using the mind at all. If the body and mind are seen and accepted as vehicles that support the soul's existence and operation in this world, then of course their needs must be fulfilled. But what is key is to train them so that they serve our soul and not the other way around where the soul is enslaved by them.

Just as a seed grows into a tree through proper care and a wild horse can be tamed to serve its master or a dog is trained to be a lifelong friend and help to a man, so can a human soul attain perfection and wisdom through self-discipline and spiritual practices even if it is 'wild' and untamed initially. Desires can be compared to an unruly beast or a tamed horse. Anger can be like a rabid dog or a loyal one; and the

intellect and imagination can be likened to a strong tree providing shade and fruits or a weak sapling blowing one way or the other with every passing 'gust of wind' (i.e. false idea or doubt planted in the mind).

Perfection is not one final stage. It has infinite levels. The more self-discipline and effort, the higher the level of perfection attained. There is a scale where the lowest level is demonic and even below beasts and the highest level surpasses even the angels. The movement of the human soul between these two extremes until it settles at one place on the scale is what *'ilm al-akhlāq* is all about. The goal of the science of akhlāq is to take a human soul as far up the scale of perfection as possible.

After knowing all this, of course the key thing is to practice what one knows. Knowledge is very important as a signpost towards perfection but it is only a *means* and not the *end*. In ignorance we remain heedless (i.e. in *ghaflah*) and are never motivated to act and grow because we don't even know its importance or the potential of the soul. However constant gaining of knowledge without acting on it will not help either. When a person is only concerned with the theoretical knowledge of spirituality, it becomes an addiction itself - to satisfy and gratify the mind with knowledge. That is why it has been said by some that 'knowledge is the thickest of veils' (that obstruct us from knowing Allāh).

How Spirituality Becomes Accessible

Some falsely imagine that when a person has purified himself or herself *then* Allāh will grant such a person special abilities and spiritual hidden knowledge. In reality all the spirituality we will even need is already accessible and readily present in abundance all around us. What stops our souls from taking this grace of Allāh is the lack of purity in our souls, too much sin and attachment to the ego and its addictions. It is like beautiful jewels all around us blocked by dirty clothes. When self-purification is complete and a soul has gotten rid of all evil habits of thought, speech and action, then the soul is ready to receive Allāh's knowledge. In fact it begins as soon as self-purification starts until it is complete.

And this is in fact the purpose and reason why Allāh created humans – to know Allāh. Keep in mind, psychic abilities such as telepathy, levitation, dream interpretation, traversing the earth in short spans, prophesizing the future, seeing others in their 'real form' and even 'walking on water' are not a sign of one's spirituality. They may come as a result of meditation or extreme psychic exercises and they may even show themselves in a person as 'side effects' of self-purification. But in reality they are not the goal of self-purification and if they enthral a person, he or she actually stops his or her spiritual growth.

True spirituality is indicated by one thing only: how much realization (*ma'rifah*) of Allāh a person has. To the degree that a person knows Allāh, to that degree they are spiritual and enlightened. Again, when we say 'knows' Allāh we do not mean it in the sense of rational knowing with the mind. We mean knowing through surrender and

realization with one's entire being. Such a perfect person is called an *'ārif* (a realized being) or one who truly 'knows' Allāh. The feminine is *'ārifa* and the plural is *'urafā*.

A human soul is unique in its ability to know its own Creator intelligently and to surrender in such a manner that it allows Allāh to take over and shine His attributes through the human being. Hence the hadith – *takhallaqu bi akhlāqillah* – 'make your akhlāq the akhlāq of Allāh'. We mentioned in Lesson 1 that a perfect human soul acts like a mirror to Allāh in which Allāh witnesses the reflection of His own attributes such as the divine attributes of love, knowledge, power, generosity, and all other such beautiful Names.

A soul that is enslaved and driven by desires is like a dog driven mindlessly. This could be the spiritual meaning of the Prophetic hadith '*angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog*.' (And of course the hadith has a literal meaning as well since a dog is *najis al-'ayn*.)

But if angels – who are pure beings of light – cannot mix with dogs, how can the rays of Allāh's grace and Divine illumination enter a heart that is filled to the brim with immoral, selfish and bestial desires?

One hadith says, '*The heart of a mu'min is the throne of the Merciful Lord*' and in a *hadith al-qudsi* Allāh says, '*The heavens and the earth cannot contain Me but the heart of My mu'min servant encompasses Me.*' And also, '*The heart of a mu'min is between My two fingers. I turn it as I please.*' We see therefore that the heart is also the central source of purity and the measure of how well we are using the body to purify the soul. Hence the hadith of Rasulullāh (s), '*I was sent to perfect good manners (makārim al-akhlāq)*.' Also, the hadith of Rasulullāh (s), '*My religion is based on cleanliness (tahārah)*' does not refer to outward cleanliness alone. If anything, it eludes to inner purity of the soul.

When the soul is not pure, good advice has no effect on it. Not even the Qur'ān helps it. In fact the more Qur'ān such an impure soul encounters, the more it denies and mocks the truth. The Qur'ān also says about itself, '*None can touch it except the purified*' (Surah al-Wāqi'ah, 56:79). The outer meaning of course is to touch the Qur'ān with wudu. But the inner meaning is to 'touch' the meaning of the Qur'ān. Its hidden realities cannot be fathomed except by those who are 'purified' of heart.

To attain ultimate and final perfection, it is necessary to walk the path of struggle against selfish lusts and immoral tendencies which may exist within the soul, and thus to prepare the soul to receive the grace of Allāh. If a person sets foot on the path of self-purification, Allāh shall come to his or her aid and guide them along, as He promises: '*And (as for) those who struggle in Our cause, surely We guide them on to our ways.*' (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:69).

Lesson 13 -14
Akhláq & the Faculties of the Soul (cont'd)

Faculties of the Soul

Just like the body has five faculties (the power of speech, sight, hearing, touch and taste), experts of akhlāq like to divide the faculties of the soul into four:

1. The power of intellectual thought (*al-quwwat al-'aqliyya*)
2. The power of imagination (*al-quwwat al-wahmiyya*)
3. The power of anger (*al-quwwat al-gadabiyya*)
4. The power of desire (*al-quwwat ash-shahwiya*)

Each one of these powers or faculties has a very important role to play in a human's spiritual journey. But they need to be tamed, controlled and used in moderation. In either extreme, they become a spiritual disease.

For example, when the intellectual power is too weak, a human cannot distinguish good from evil and is easily misled. When it is too extreme, then everything is sought through the mind only and often leads to atheism and doubt in God.

If the power of imagination is too weak, a person loses all creativity and the ability to nurture the gifts that Allāh has blessed him or her with; and if it is too strong it leads to demonic ideas, satanic plots, sinful fantasies and so on.

If the power of anger is too weak, a human cannot defend himself or stand up to fight for the truth, verbally or physically. When it is excessive, a person will not forgive or stop to think but will unleash anger that may destroy himself and those around him in a fit of rage.

When the power of desire is too weak, a person may lose interest in life and in healthy socializing with others. When it is too extreme and untrained it leads to promiscuity and immorality (such as adultery) and love for the world in general (wealth, power, comfort, pleasure, etc.).

The relationship of the four powers of the soul has been compared to a traveller riding a strong fast horse accompanied with a dog and also having a spy for him that looks out for him against highway bandits. The traveller is the power of reason. The horse is the power of desires. The dog represents anger and the spy employed by the rider is the power of imagination.

If the traveller can control all three – the mount, the dog and the spy, it all works in his favour and he arrives to his final destination safely. But if not, they destroy him.

The horse (desires) may throw the traveller (reason) off its back, the dog (anger) might start attacking everything around and even harm the traveller (reason) and the spy (imagination) might start giving false information to the traveller (reason) creating all kinds of false ideas and fears in the traveller. On the other hand, if the traveller knows when to trust the spy and what to use him for, how to stay on top of and in control of the horse and ensure the dog always listens to him and hunts or attacks only when his master orders it, then all is well.

Every spiritual disease is simply a deficiency or excess of one of these four faculties of the soul (or a combination of them). When found in moderation, it becomes a spiritual virtue instead of a disease. Here are some examples:

Faculty of the Soul	Deficiency (Tafreet)	Moderation (I'tidāl)	Excess (Ifrāt)
Intellect	Stupidity	Wisdom	Slyness and Craftiness
Anger	Cowardice	Courage and Bravery	Foolhardiness
Desire	Lethargy	Chastity and Modesty	Voraciousness and Insatiable Greed
Intellect & Imagination	Submissiveness	Justice	Tyranny

Jihād al-Akbar

By now you are already familiar with the term Jihād al-Akbar (the Greater Jihād) that refers to the struggle and striving against one's self.

We have already described how the mind and instinctive physical needs of a human being seek to dominate themselves and it is only the spiritual dimension of people that truly make then 'human' instead of just a glorified socio-political animal.

The eleventh century scholar al-Ghazāli remarked that before the process of self-purification begins, man is just 'envious like an ox, greedy like a pig, bites like a dog, eats like a camel, takes revenge like a leopard, is cunning like a fox, and clever like a devil.'

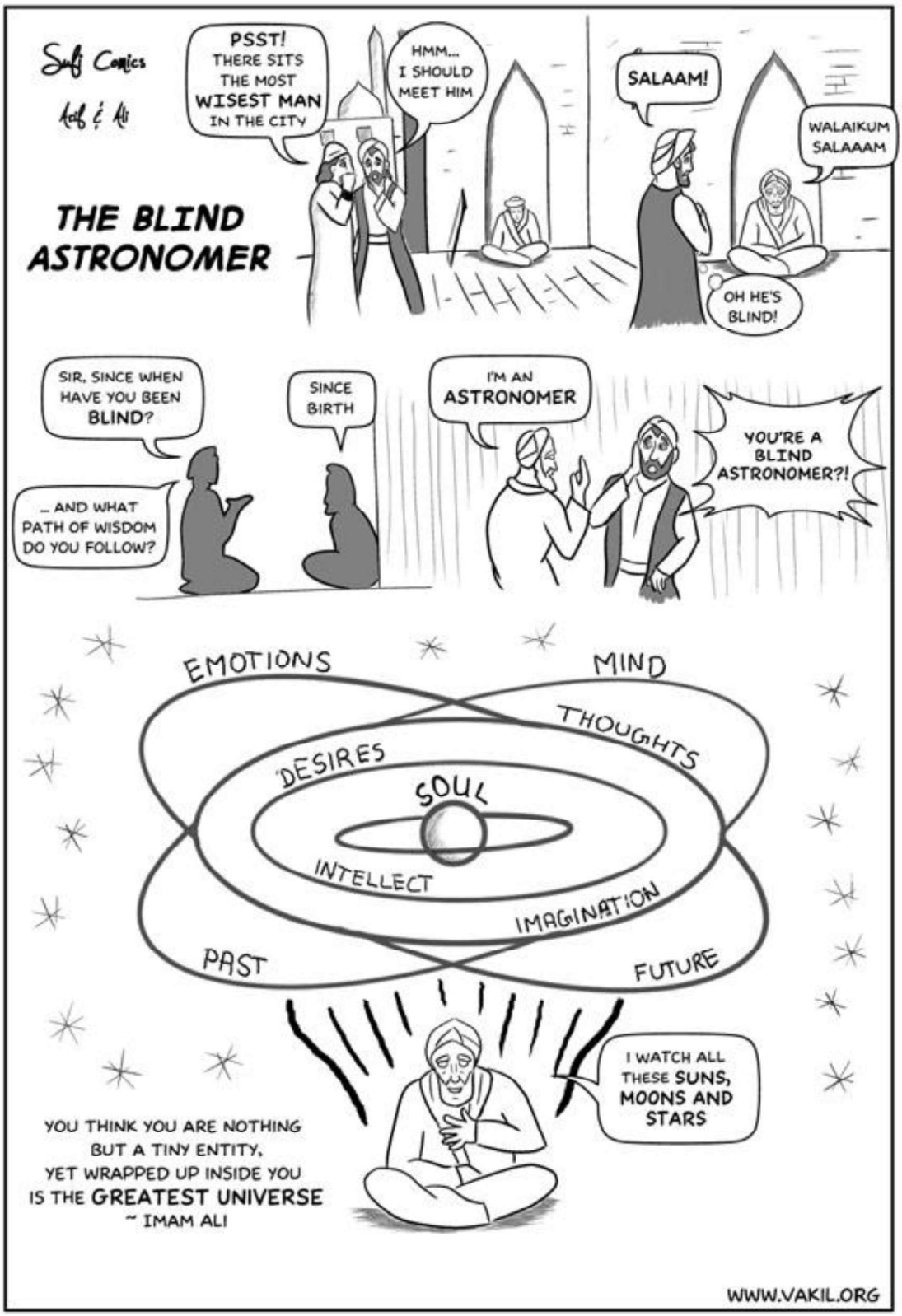
We therefore have two existences. When we look at our physical existence only, we seem to be very weak and humble creatures no different from animals that are constantly and only occupied with eating, drinking, seeking shelter, procreating, and all that is related to the body. It is only when we start focusing on the intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual aspects of our life that we see our other, more important and everlasting existence. That is where we find the goals and aspirations that differentiates us from other animals and elevates us over them. That is where we move from being selfish to selfless, from simply

fighting for survival to being willing to sacrifice our lives for a greater, eternal good. That is where we realize we are different because of our soul and that even though we share the same planet as animals, this is not our home.

It is as if we came from Jannah and we are aliens here trying to go back home. In fact, we are not physical beings who undergo spiritual experiences. Rather we are spiritual beings undergoing physical experiences for a while so that we may learn from it and perfect our spirits or souls.

The ultimate purpose and philosophy of all Islāmic laws (*ahkām*) is therefore the refining of the character and soul of individuals. And success in this world and the hereafter will only come to us if we are concerned with *tazkiyat an-nafs*. Otherwise life will appear to have no purpose or meaning to us.

As we begin with a firm resolution to focus on our souls and to perfect it and liberate it from identification with the ego, we must remember that *tazkiyat an-nafs* operates at all levels of human activity: thought, emotions and action. It is not only purity in our actions that we must strive for, but even purity in our thoughts, consciousness and our very existence at all times.


Sufi Comics
Asaf & Ali
THE BLIND ASTRONOMER
PSST! THERE SITS THE MOST WISEST MAN IN THE CITY
HMM... I SHOULD MEET HIM
SALAAM!
WALAIKUM SALAAAM
OH HE'S BLIND!
SIR, SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN BLIND?
SINCE BIRTH
I'M AN ASTRONOMER
YOU'RE A BLIND ASTRONOMER?!
.. AND WHAT PATH OF WISDOM DO YOU FOLLOW?
EMOTIONS
MIND
THOUGHTS
DESIRES
SOUL
INTELLECT
IMAGINATION
PAST
FUTURE
I WATCH ALL THESE SUNS, MOONS AND STARS
YOU THINK YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A TINY ENTITY, YET WRAPPED UP INSIDE YOU IS THE GREATEST UNIVERSE
~ IMAM ALI
WWW.VAKIL.ORG

Lesson 15-16
Dealing with Balá

The word '*balā*' can mean many things: trials, tribulations, sufferings, afflictions, and so on. Some Muslims assume that *balā* only befalls the evil as a punishment for their sins and disobedience to Allāh. But this is not true. *Balā* is reserved for the most elite amongst the faithful. It serves as a test of faith whilst helping the pious purifying themselves of attachment to the world and elevating them to higher levels of spirituality.

Balā may come in the form of illness, poverty, imprisonment, mistreatment by others, loss of loved ones (including children), and practically anything that we can imagine as unpleasant and hard to endure.

Those who are evil and deserving of punishment in this world may also experience similar unpleasantness but their experiences are because of very different reasons and therefore referred to as *'adhāb* (punishment) or *'iqāb* (chastisement).

How can a person tell if what they suffer in life is a punishment (*'adhāb*) or a trial (*balā*)? Their reaction to the experience will tell them. If it brings them closer to Allāh and elevates their faith, then it is *balā*. If it drives them further away from Allāh and increases their doubt in Him then it is a form of punishment. This is because Allāh never tries a *mu'min(a)* to shake his or her faith. He only tries them to the capacity that they can endure so that they grow further in their spirituality. He also never punishes a person in a manner that would shake their faith unless all excuses have been exhausted and the person has chosen to sell his or her hereafter for this world.

Islām has a unique perspective on *balā*. Because humans by nature will flee from suffering and Islām does not ask them to desire what is unnatural, Muslims are told <u>not</u> to pray or wish for *balā*. Yet if they are tested, then they are asked to show patience and even give thanks for being chosen for the test. And thereafter they are encouraged to ask Allāh to help them pass the test and to relieve them of the suffering.

All prophets, Imāms and people of Allāh suffered in life as an example that what humans see as good is not reserved for the faithful and what humans consider as bad is not a sign of being evil. And because the prophets and Imāms have greater endurance to suffering and more conviction and trust in Allāh, they bore the most suffering in human history.

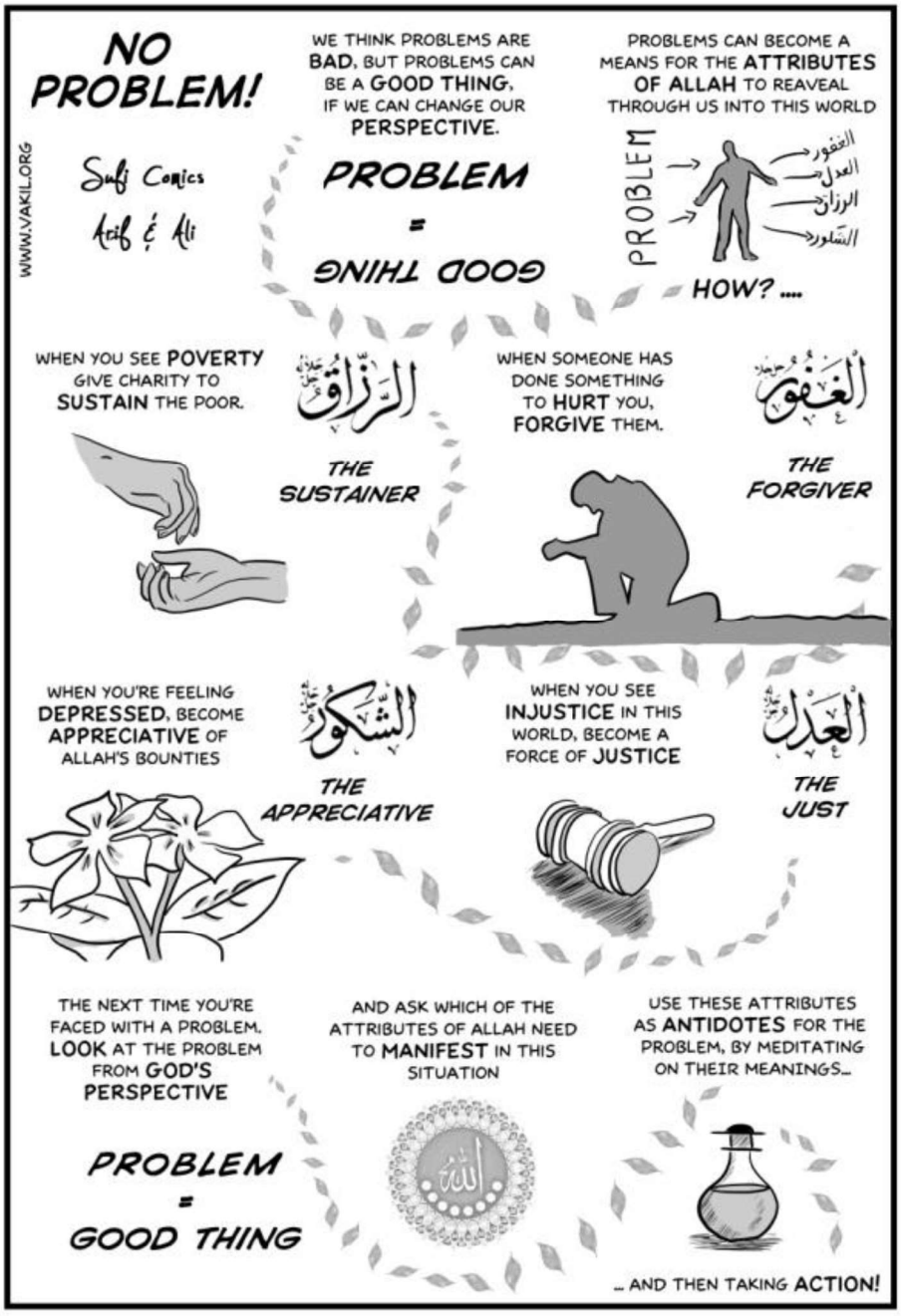
Suffering and trials are like a black cloud with a silver lining. Even natural disasters that seem meaningless have wisdom behind them that only becomes apparent after many years. The key is to trust Allāh's wisdom and not to assume good and bad as being absolute. Everything is relative. If an experience brings you closer to Allāh, it is

good even if it appears to be unpleasant. And if an experience distances you from Allāh, it is bad even if it appears pleasant. Hence Allāh says:

﴿...وَعَسى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

Yet it may be that you dislike something while it is good for you, and it may be that you love something while it is bad for you, and Allāh knows and you do not know.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:216


NO PROBLEM!
WWW.VAKIL.ORG
Sufi Comics
Atif & Ali
WE THINK PROBLEMS ARE BAD, BUT PROBLEMS CAN BE A GOOD THING, IF WE CAN CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVE.
PROBLEM = GOOD THING
PROBLEMS CAN BECOME A MEANS FOR THE ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH TO REAVEAL THROUGH US INTO THIS WORLD
PROBLEM
الغفور
العدل
الرزاق
الشكور
HOW? ....
WHEN YOU SEE POVERTY GIVE CHARITY TO SUSTAIN THE POOR.
الرزاق
THE SUSTAINER
WHEN SOMEONE HAS DONE SOMETHING TO HURT YOU, FORGIVE THEM.
الغفور
THE FORGIVER
WHEN YOU'RE FEELING DEPRESSED, BECOME APPRECIATIVE OF ALLAH'S BOUNTIES
الشكور
THE APPRECIATIVE
WHEN YOU SEE INJUSTICE IN THIS WORLD, BECOME A FORCE OF JUSTICE
العدل
THE JUST
THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE FACED WITH A PROBLEM, LOOK AT THE PROBLEM FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE
PROBLEM = GOOD THING
AND ASK WHICH OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH NEED TO MANIFEST IN THIS SITUATION
USE THESE ATTRIBUTES AS ANTIDOTES FOR THE PROBLEM, BY MEDITATING ON THEIR MEANINGS...
... AND THEN TAKING ACTION!

The Qur'ān on Balā

﴿أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمْ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلاَ إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ﴾

Do you suppose that you shall enter paradise though there has not yet come to you the like of [what befell] those who went before you? Stress and distress befell them and they were convulsed until the apostle and the faithful who were with him said, 'When will Allāh's help [come]?' Look! Allāh's help is indeed near!

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:214

﴿...وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ﴾

...so that Allāh may test what is in your breasts, and that He may purge what is in your hearts, and Allāh knows best what is in the breasts.

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:154

﴿أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلاَ رَسُولِهِ وَلاَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

Do you suppose that you will be let off while Allāh has not yet ascertained those of you who struggle (lit. do jihād) amongst you and those who do not take, besides Allāh and His Apostle and the faithful, anyone as [their] confidant? Allāh is well aware of what you do.

- Surah Tawbah, 9:16

﴿أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لاَ يُفْتَنُونَ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ﴾

Do the people suppose that they will be let off because they say, 'We have faith,' and they will not be tested? Certainly We tested those who were before them. So Allāh shall surely ascertain those who are truthful, and He shall surely ascertain the liars.

- Surah al-Ankabut, 29:2-3

﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ﴾

We will surely test you until We ascertain those of you who struggle (do jihād) and those who are patient, and We shall appraise your record.

- Surah Muhammad, 47:31

In all these āyāt, when Allāh says, '*until We ascertain*' (meaning 'until We prove') the test is not because Allāh does not know but it is to let a person see for himself or herself how true he or she is to what he or she claims and for people to pass and fail tests so that they are granted a place in Paradise or Hellfire accordingly.

Hadith on Balā

1. Rasulullāh (s), 'You are not a *mu'min* until you count *balā* as a blessing (*ni'mah*) and comfort as a trial. This is because the suffering of this world is the blessing of the hereafter and the comfort of this world is a trial in the next world.'

2. Rasulullāh (s), 'Allāh nourishes his *mu'min* (faithful) servant with trials just like a mother nourishes her baby with milk.'

3. Rasulullāh (s), 'When Allāh intends good for a community, He tries them.'

4. *Balā* is a sign of Allāh's love. Rasulullāh (s), 'When Allāh loves a person, He tries him. When this love reaches a climax, He annihilates him.' He was asked, 'what does '*annihilates him*' mean?' He said, 'He does not leave him with any wealth nor any children.'

5. Imām Ali ('a), 'Trials for an oppressor is to discipline him. For a *mu'min* it is to test him and for a prophet it is to elevate his status.'

6. Imām Ali ('a), 'All praise is to Allāh who made the purging of the sins of our Shi'ah in this world through their trials so as to secure their obedience and so that they may become deserving of its reward.'

7. Imām Ali ('a), '*Balā* comes faster to a pure *mu'min* than rain runs down into a valley.'

8. Imām Ali ('a), 'Do not rejoice at wealth and comfort and do not grieve at poverty and *balā*. For gold is purified with fire and a *mu'min* is purified with tests (*balā*).'

9. Imām Ali ('a) said the severest trials for a believer are three: to give out his money to help others, to be just and fair even when it is against himself and to remember Allāh excessively. Then he clarified that when he says remembering Allāh excessively he doesn't mean saying, '*subhān Allāh wal*

hamdu lillāh' but he means remembering Allāh with regards to what Allāh has made halāl and harām for him. i.e. at the time of temptation to sin.

10. Imām Zayn al-Abidin (‘a), ‘I dislike that a person should always be healthy and well in the world and never be tried with some affliction.’

11. Imām al-Bāqir (‘a), ‘A man is tried according to the measure of his love.’

12. Imām al-Bāqir (‘a), ‘A *mu’min* suffers every kind of affliction and dies every kind of death except that he never commits suicide.’

13. Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) and Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) were asked at separate occasions whether a *mu’min* suffers and undergoes tribulations and they answered, ‘Is *balā* for anyone but a *mu’min*?’

14. Imām as-Sādiq (‘a), ‘The world is a prison for the faithful. From what prison is good expected?’

15. Imām as-Sādiq (‘a), ‘A *mu’min* is like two sides of a scale. Every time his *imān* (faith) increases, so do his trials.’

16. Imām as-Sādiq (‘a), ‘Allāh sends his *mu’min* servant with a variety of trials just like a man who is away from home sends his family gifts.’

17. Imām as-Sādiq (‘a), ‘In paradise there is a level that a person can never attain except by being tried in his health.’

18. It is said that Abu Dhar once said, ‘People hate three things while I love them. I love death, I love poverty and I love trials.’ Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘May Allāh bless Abu Dhar! But the correct thing is to say: ‘death in obedience to Allāh is better than life in disobedience to Allāh. Poverty in obedience to Allāh is better than wealth in disobedience to Allāh. Trials in obedience to Allāh is better than health in disobedience to Allāh.’

19. Imām al-Askari (‘a), ‘There is no suffering except that Allāh has in it a blessing that overcomes it.’

Istidrāj

Just as Allāh gives trials and suffering in this world to those He loves, He also gives comfort, pleasure, wealth and what we think of as ‘good’ to those who disbelieve in Him. This is because too much ‘good’ in this world makes a person forgetful of Allāh, of the Hereafter and even of his or her own soul and its purification. So a person who turns away from Allāh attracts more worldly pleasures to himself or herself. It is as if the worldly pleasures become his or her reward and then they have nothing in the hereafter. As Allāh puts it:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِتَابًا مُؤَجَّلاً وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ﴾

No soul may die except by Allāh's leave, at an appointed time. Whoever desires the reward of this world, We will give him of it; and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We will give him of it; and soon We will reward the grateful.

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:145

And also:

﴿مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ﴾

Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We will increase for him his harvest, and whoever desires the harvest of the world, We will give it to him, but he will have no share in the Hereafter.

- Surah ash-Shura, 42:20

The *'ulama* of *akhlāq* and spirituality have a special term for when Allāh punishes a person and destroys him not by what we think of as 'bad' but by what we think of as 'good' such as too much wealth, too many children, too much luxury and comfort, very good health, and so on. The term is called '*istidrāj*'. It literally means taking someone or something gradually. This is because when a person is punished through *istidrāj*, it is so subtle and slow that he or she never realizes what is happening and also the fact that it is a punishment disguised as a blessing.

One of the qualities of *istidrāj* is the fact that it is gradual, meaning Allāh gives the person a lot of time (or what is called 'respite'). And Allāh actually describes this in the Qur'ān as well:

﴿وَلاَ يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لأَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّى يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنْ الطَّيِّبِ ...﴾

Let the faithless not suppose that the respite that We grant them is good for their souls: We give them respite only that they may increase in sin, and there is a humiliating punishment for them. Allāh will not leave the faithful in your present state, until He has separated the bad ones from the good….

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:178-179

The idea that the world is not a place of comfort and rest for the faithful is so clear in Islām that Allāh tells us in the Qur'ān that if it was not for the fact that some of the

Muslims with weak faith would stop believing, Allāh would in fact shower the good of this world on the faithless and the faithful would not have a share in it. He says:

﴿وَلَوْلاَ أَنْ يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَانِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِنْ فَضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِئُونَ وَزُخْرُفًا وَإِنْ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

Were it not [for the danger] that mankind would be one community,[68] We would have surely made for those who defy the All-beneficent, silver roofs for their houses and [silver] stairways by which they ascend; and [silver] doors for their houses and [silver] couches on which they recline; and ornaments of gold;[69] yet all that would be nothing but the wares of the life of this world, and the Hereafter near your Lord is for the Godwary.

- Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:33-35

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) commented on the āyah above and said, 'If Allāh were to do that then no one would have remained a believer.'

The origin of the word *istidrāj* comes from the Qur'ān itself:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ﴾

*As for those who deny Our signs, We will draw them imperceptibly [into ruin] (**nastadrijuhum**), whence they do not know. And I will grant them respite, for My devising is indeed sure.*

- Surah al-Arif, 7:182-183

﴿فَذَرْنِي وَمَنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ﴾

So leave Me with those who deny this discourse. We will draw them imperceptibly [into ruin], whence they do not know. I will grant them respite, for My devising is indeed sure.

- Surah al-Qalam, 68:44

Obviously the question that comes to mind is: when I am healthy or earning a lot of money or blessed with children and happiness or succeeding in life, how do I know if

[68] That is, a monolithic community of people without faith.
[69] Or 'houses embellished with gold.'

it is truly a blessing from Allāh or if it is *istidrāj* and I am being set up for destruction in the hereafter?

The answer is the same as the previous question on how do we know if a suffering is a test (*balā*) or a punishment (*'adhāb*). It will depend on our reaction. If we find we are obeying Allāh and the more He blesses us the more we remember Him, thank Him and share our blessings with others, then it is truly a blessing. If we find that that the more He blesses us, the more we disobey Him, forget Him, stop praying, stop going to the masjid, and we begin to hoard and become miserly, then it is *istidrāj*.

That is why Imām Ali ('a) said, 'When you see your Lord sending you trials (while you obey Him) then thank Him. When you see your Lord sending you only blessings consecutively while you continue to disobey Him, then beware!'

What to do During Trials and Suffering

﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنْ الأَمْوالِ وَالأَنفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرْ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ أُوْلَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ الْمُهْتَدُونَ﴾

We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits; ***and give good news to the patient — those who, when an affliction visits them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allāh, and to Him do we indeed return.'*** *It is they who receive the blessings of their Lord and [His] mercy, and it is they who are the [rightly] guided.*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:155-157

Allāh revealed to Nabi Musa ('a), 'O Musa, during difficulties, make Me your shield and fort, to resolve your issues.' i.e. turn to Me for help.

Imām Ali ('a), 'When in difficulty, say, '*la hawla wa lā quwwata illa billāhi al-'alliyi al-adheem*', you will be released from it.

Imām ar-Rida ('a), 'I saw my father in a dream and he said to me, 'my son, when you are in difficulty then say often, '*Yā Ra'ufu Yā Raheem' (O Compassionate, O Merciful)*.' Then Imām ar-Rida ('a) said, 'And one whom we see in a dream, it is the same as if we saw him whilst awake.'

How to Behave when Others Suffer

Rasulullāh (s), 'When you see people in suffering then say '*Al-hamdulillah*' but let them not hear you for that will grieve them.'

Imām al-Bāqir (‘a), ‘when you see someone suffering, then say three times without the person hearing you, *‘Alhamdu lillāhi ladhi ‘āfāni mimma ibtalāk bihi wa law shā’a fa’al.*’ (‘All praise is to Allāh who protected me from what you are afflicted with and had He wished, He could have afflicted me too.’) Then he said, ‘whoever does that will never suffer from that *balā*.’

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a), said, ‘When you see a man suffering and Allāh has blessed you from it, then say ‘O Allāh, I neither laugh nor boast but I thank You over how great Your blessing is on me.’ (*Allāhumma inni lā askharu wa lā afkharu wa lākin ahmaduka ‘ala ‘adhimi ni’māika ‘allaya*).

Imām Ali (‘a) has also said that the person who is not afflicted is not in any less need of praying to Allāh for help and safety than the person who is already afflicted. This teaches us that we must ask Allāh for His protection even when we are healthy and in ease. And that one of the key reactions to suffering is to turn to Allāh for help and use it as a means to come closer to Him and to surrender to His Will and His Wisdom.

Sabr (Patience)

Sabr or patience, are of two types: Sabr over difficulties (what pains you) and sabr over temptation (what pleases you). And Sabr over temptation is greater in reward. This is because when you are in pain, you don’t have much of a choice except to bear patience over your suffering. But when you are tempted with sinful desires, you have a choice of giving in and doing *harām* or bearing patience and avoiding it. It therefore requires a stronger willpower and more courage.

Rasulullāh (s), ‘I am amazed at a faithful (*mu’min*) and his complaining when sick. If he knew how much reward he gets in the illness, he would wish never to stop being sick until he meets his Lord, the Mighty and Glorious.’

Imām Ali (‘a), ‘Patience is a form of courage.’

Imām al-Bāqir (‘a), ‘If a *mu’min* knew what reward he gets for suffering afflictions, he would wish he could be cut up into pieces with scissors.’

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a), ‘Patience is to faith (*imān*) what the head is to the body. Just as without the head the body is lost and useless, so without patience, faith is lost and useless.’

Nabi Isa (‘a), ‘You will never reach what you love until you are patient over what you hate.’

AL-HAMDU-LILLAH
Sufi Comics
Arif & Ali
WWW.VAKIL.ORG
IT'S 10TH CENTURY BAGHDAD, SHAYKH ABDUL QADIR TAKES A CLASS IN A MADRESSA. SOMEONE EXCLAIMS...
O SHAYKH! YOUR SHIP CARRYING GOODS ACROSS SEA HAS SUNK. NOTHING HAS REMAINED !!
اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ
O SHAYKH, I BRING GOOD NEWS THAT YOUR SHIP IS SAFE !
اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ
AL-HAMDU-LILLAH (ALL PRAISE BELONGS TO GOD)
WE UNDERSTOOD WHY YOU PRAISED GOD WHEN YOU HEARD THE GOOD NEWS, BUT WHAT IS THE REASON FOR PRAISING GOD WHEN YOU HEARD YOUR SHIP SUNK?
WHEN I HEARD MY SHIP HAD SUNK, I SEARCHED IN MYSELF IF I FELT GRIEVED BECAUSE OF THE NEWS. I PRAISED GOD, THAT I WAS NOT.
WHEN I HEARD THAT MY SHIP WAS SAFE, I SEARCHED IN MYSELF IF I WAS OVER JOYED.
AND I PRAISED GOD THAT I WAS NOT
لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ
SO THAT YOU MAY NOT GRIEVE FOR WHAT HAS ESCAPED YOU, NOR BE EXULTANT AT WHAT HE HAS GIVEN YOU (QURAN 57:23)

STABALISE THE INNER STATE
Sufi Comics
Arif & Ali
WWW.VAKIL.ORG
O WISE MEN OF MY KINGDOM! CREATE FOR ME A SAYING THAT WILL STABALISE MY INNER STATE
WHEN I AM SAD ..
.. IT WILL BRING ME JOY
WHEN I AM HAPPY ..
IT REMINDS ME ..
.. OF SADNESS
REMEMBER... IT CANNOT BE TOO LONG, AS I WANT TO KEEP IT WITH ME ALWAYS... NOW GO!
THE WISE MEN CONTEMPLATED DEEPLY ON THE KING'S COMMAND AND FINALLY RETURNED PRESENTING A SMALL BOX ..
AH ...
.. CONTAINING A RING WITH THE INSCRIPTION
This Too Shall Pass

Lesson 17-19
A Profile of the Perfect Shi'ah Youth

Before defining what makes the *Perfect Muslim Youth*, let us summarize the key lessons of life that we have covered during this final Madrasah graduating year:

1. **Importance of Practice**

   Acquiring religious knowledge is easy. Being interested in spirituality (*Irfān*), *tafsir*, etc. is easy. What is difficult is putting it into practice. Instead of practising what they already know, most people are in search of 'more knowledge' in the hope that it will somehow 'miraculously' help them evolve further. So they attend more classes, more seminars, more lectures. Knowledge is a double-edged sword. Without it, we remain ignorant and don't know how to evolve. But acquiring it and not practising it, blocks us from acquiring more real knowledge and in fact hardens our hearts. Hence the hadith of Rasulullāh (s) that say, '*One who increases in knowledge but does not increase in his/her detachment from the world, does not increase in anything except his/her distance from Allāh*.' It is therefore the 'boring' stuff and difficult matters – fasting, worshipping, reflecting, working with the poor, etc. that is required to change the theory we learn into real knowledge.

2. **Importance of Being Connected to the Community**

   A lot of youth feel pressured to help out in their community and withdraw when they have exams or start university. The community doesn't need the youth. Middle-aged individuals (who can help themselves) usually run the community. The youth are simply given the opportunity to learn to become adults. From a youth perspective however, the community can be a life-saver – literally – especially when they start university. Everyone needs to socialize and to mingle with peers. The community gives you an alternative to being friends with those who lack Islāmic values, experiment with drugs, dabble with issues like atheism, etc. When you are attached to and involved in your local community (e.g. a youth group), it acts as a shield that protects you from being confused, lost, depressed, lonely, losing your faith, etc. To stop coming to the masjid because you now go to university is a fatal mistake. It is when you start university that you need to be part of the Muslim community the most.

3. **Importance of Learning all your Life by Teaching**

   It would be nice to have a teacher all our lives or someone who can always be there to help answer all our questions. But at some point, we need to

become our own teacher. And it starts after you graduate from Madrasah. Nothing will give you the discipline of constant learning like being a teacher.

4. Importance of Giving Back to Society – the Meaning of Being Responsible and an Adult

The youth will often complain that their parents treat them like kids. The reason parents do that is because they don't see a sense of responsibility in you. A sense of responsibility is shown when you can do what normal adults do without being told to do it. For example, when you don't have to be reminded to clean your room or to take out the garbage. When you contribute some of what you earn to the family upkeep. When you don't spend all your free time playing computer games, chatting with friends, surfing the internet. As soon as you learn to show the concerns that an adult does and you take on the responsibility of tasks at home without being told – it may be running the washing machine, picking up things lying around, going out to get the grocery, etc. - you begin to evolve into an adult. To put it differently, a child is very selfish from birth. They assume their parents have to serve them and provide for them food, clothes, shelter, time and make their entire lives rotate around theirs. It never occurs them to thank their parents or appreciate their sacrifices except perhaps on special occasions. Your parents will only see you as an adult when you move from being entirely selfish to being selfless.

5. Life Only Gets Busier Until You Retire

A lot of people assume they will contribute to society and the community or attain all their noble and religious goals after they finish university or this and that. As we grow older, life only gets busier and our commitments multiply. We only find time when we retire at which we point we don't have the energy and zeal to make a difference.

6. Maximize your Productivity in Life before you are 60-65 – not before you die.

No one wishes to die when they are 60-65. Everyone would love to live longer. At least until their 80s or 90s. But whatever you wish to accomplish in life, do so before you are in your 60s. Don't say, I hope to do this or that 'before I die.' The point is: most people, even if they are alive after they grow old, they are not productive enough to do much. So being alive when you're old won't make that much of a difference in terms of your goals in life.

7. **Don't be Ashamed of Learning and Asking Regardless of your Age or Circumstances.**

8. **Importance of Memorizing the Qur'ān and Ad'iyā**

   Memorizing the Qur'ān, hadith and *ad'iyā* (pl. of du'a) is not just for the spiritual rewards (*thawāb*). Often in life, when you are faced with challenges or severe difficulties, you will only find solace from the Qur'ān, ad'iyā, hadith of Rasulullāh (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (a) and your faith. If you know much of this by heart, you will be surprised how the appropriate passages will come to you naturally to guide you in how you react to situations.

   Remember: Whatever you make an effort to memorize while you are a child or even a teenager, can stay with you for life. What you try and memorize in your 30s and 40s will be hard to retain. So make the time to memorize as much of the Qur'ān as you can before you are older.

9. **The Major Decisions you Will Make in Life Include:**
   - Career
   - Spouse
   - Religious Devotion and Practice

10. **The Not So Major Aspects of Life Include:**
    - How Rich You Are
    - Where you Live
    - Who your Friends Are

    Of course where you live is important. It is *harām* to go and live in a place where there are no Shi'ahs or Muslims and where you will not be able to practice your faith or there is danger you will lose it. And of course it is very important who your friends are because they can influence you positively or negatively and help you succeed in the hereafter or ruin you. But what we mean is that if you make the right career choice and you make the right choice of spouse who shares your religious goals and you don't comprise on your faith and how you practice Islām (salāh on time, hijāb, going to masjid, etc.) then you don't have to live in a Muslim country or have lots of friends. You could be living in a non-Muslim country and have no friends but still lead an Islāmic life.

The Perfect Youth

BELIEF

The perfect youth understands the importance of tawhid and why it is the primary purpose for which all prophets and messengers were ever sent. The aim in life, for the perfect youth is to gain true realization (*ma'rifah*) of Allāh. He or she is deep in his/her reflection and understanding of religion and his/her faith is unshakable. The perfect youth lives by the Qur'ān and the teachings of Rasulullāh (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). He or she is very tolerant and understanding.

Because of his or her pure belief that is not mixed with culture, the perfect youth is very moderate and never over emotional about anything. He or she is never extreme or radical whether it is in what they believe or what they don't believe. The perfect youth does not doubt in Islām or its teachings only because science says so. He/she is not judgmental, harsh and intolerant of others. The perfect youth sees himself or herself as a student of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and a teacher of others.

DEVOTION & PRACTICE

The Perfect Youth is strong in faith and not ashamed of showing it. If it is a girl she does not compromise on her hijāb for example. If it is time for salāh, the perfect youth will pray even in a public park without worrying who is watching. This is because he/she is too focused on the fact that Allāh is watching.

One of the aims of the perfect youth is to memorize the Qur'ān. He/she is eager to learn Arabic.

The perfect youth loves to help the poor and the needy and is always looking for ways to help the underprivileged.

The perfect youth never misses *salāt al-layl* and loves to fast often even when it is not the month of Ramadan e.g. on Mondays and Thursdays. When the perfect youth prays, it is noticeable how long their ruku' and sujud are and how much they enjoy worshipping their Lord.

The perfect youth is greedy for religious knowledge. The perfect youth has read the Qur'ān with its meaning (translation) several times and has read Nahj al-Balāgha cover-to-cover.

The perfect youth is sincere in his/her faith. This means he or she obeys the shari'ah without ask 'why'. There is nothing more hateful to the perfect youth than committing harām. He or she will take extra precaution in obeying Allāh. The perfect youth does not listen to music or like being around a place where there is music being played.

RELATIONS

FAMILY

The perfect youth has utmost respect for his/her parents. He or she will not let his/her parents serve him/her but will always be at hand to serve them. He/she is dependable and responsible even in the eyes of his/her parents. When a parent walks into a room, the perfect youth stands up in respect for his/her parent and will not sit down until they do. He or she does not raise his/her voice above his/her parents and does not look back at them with anger. You will never see the perfect youth arguing or speaking back rudely to his/her parent.

FRIENDS

The perfect youth has a strong personality. He or she influences others positively instead of being influenced by them. The perfect youth does not have friends who do drugs or alcohol. In fact, the perfect youth does not have any friends who lead sinful lives or are disrespectful of Islām.

The perfect youth values his/her time and will not go to the mall 'just to hang out' or 'kill time'. His or her friends are few and selective with similar interests. Most of the perfect youth's friends are practising Muslims. He/she does not make fun of others especially just to make their friends laugh. When the perfect youth socializes with his/her friends he/she is never seen backbiting or lying, even if it is in jest and joking. The perfect youth sees him or herself as one waiting to serve the Imām of the Time.

WORK

The perfect youth is not lazy. Rarely will you see him/her just lying around doing nothing. They regard their time as being precious so they won't sit in front of the TV/computer just to waste time.

The perfect youth always has more religious knowledge than anyone else around them in their family and/or friends gathering. He or she is reliable and independent. The perfect youth does not like to ask others for help when they can help themselves. He or she is neither a miser nor extravagant.

GOALS IN LIFE

The perfect youth is simple in his or her clothes and food. They see the people of the world as being foolish in how they give such importance to brand names and fashion. The perfect youth is aware of the current world political affairs and concerned about fellow Muslims and their suffering around the world.

The motto of the perfect youth is simply this: 'My prayers and my sacrifices, my life and my death, are all only for Allāh, the Sustainer of the Universe.' (Qur'ān, 6:162)

CHARACTER

The perfect youth is very polite and gentle yet very brave and courageous. Everyone speaks of how nice and polite he/she is. When the perfect youth is happy you will see him/her laugh lightly or smile but never laugh loudly and noisily. No one has ever heard the perfect youth swear and no one ever will.

The perfect youth is decent. He or she is never seen with their legs stretched out in front of others, even if it is just their friends. He or she is always seated respectfully in the presence of others. The perfect youth dresses modestly. Besides Hijab, he or she is never seen dressed in clothes that are tight or revealing. He/she loves to dress in comfortable but loose-fitting clothes that reflect his/her inner sense of shame and modesty. He/she is so chaste that no one will even think or dare of sharing a dirty joke or saying indecent things in their presence. And because he/she is courageous, even if someone were to act sinfully in his/her presence, he/she would walk away or show his/her displeasure. He/she won't smile or 'play along' only to please someone whilst displeasing Allāh.

The perfect youth rarely loses his/her temper. He or she does not like being praised for the good he/she does. When he/she gives charity or helps someone, he/she will always hide it. The perfect youth is not wasteful, whether in food or clothes or spending. They never buy anything impulsively and they never hoard clothes or anything that can be of help of others.

LIFSTYLE

The perfect youth is not obsessed with what others his or her age group are obsessed with e.g. computer games, internet, chatting, or the latest craze. The perfect youth is focused on the hereafter. He or she will often talk to Allāh even if it is in his or her heart. She or he is extremely sincere.

Grade 12

Stream 1

Lesson Sequence: 20-28

Advanced Lessons in Islamic History

We estimate this unit can be taught over 9 lessons.

Lesson 20-21
Misconceptions about Islám in History

In this lesson and the next we shall study various issues that are surrounded by myths to the detriment of Islām. These myths have been propagated over the centuries either out of ignorance or maliciously with the intent of defaming Islām. The issues we will study inshā Allāh will include:

1. How did Islām Spread? The myth that it was spread by the sword.
2. Jihād in Islām. The myth that Islām promotes violence and terrorism.
3. The Marriages of Rasulullāh (s). The myth that Rasulullāh (s) married many wives like ancient kings and rulers, just for power and pleasure.
4. Slavery & Islām. They myth that Islām was not opposed to slavery.

1. How Did Islām Spread?

"Islām is an evil religion. It promotes violence." These are some common labels used against Islām by the anti-Islāmic media. Such bias is based on the historical stereotype that the Arabs forced the non-Arabs into the Islāmic faith. In the recent past it was not uncommon to see books with drawings of an Arab riding his horse with sword in the one hand & the Qur'ān in the other.

So let us see how Islām spread in the world: by sword or by conversion?

The Qur'ān's Perspective

The Qur'ān is very clear that there is no compulsion in becoming a Muslim:

﴿لاَ إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنْ الغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لاَ انفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

There is no compulsion in religion; guidance has become clear from error. So whosoever rejects the idol and believes in Allāh, he has laid hold onto the most firm rope which will not break; Allāh is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:256

It makes perfect sense that there can be no force in accepting Islām; Islām wants sincere believers, not hypocrites. By forced conversion, you only increase the numbers of hypocrites, not the number of true believers.

Rasulullāh (s) is also mentioned in the Qur'ān as a "reminder only" - not as a person who forces Islām upon others:

﴿فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ. لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُسَيْطِرٍ﴾

Therefore, remind, for you are only a reminder; you are not a watcher over them.
- Surah al-Ghāshiya, 88:21-22

The Prophet (s)'s Example

The mission of Rasulullāh (s) may be divided into two parts: (a) first thirteen years of preaching Islām in Makkah, and (b) the last eleven years of preaching Islām in Madina.

During the First Phase of Rasulullāh (s)'s mission that lasted 13 years (i.e. the Makkan era), the Muslims were in minority, always oppressed and being hunted by the Quraysh. So the use of force was out of question. Most of the followers of Rasulullāh (s) were the downtrodden and the weak who were being oppressed by the polytheist Quraysh.

During the Second Phase of Rasulullāh (s)'s mission that lasted 11 years (i.e. the Madinan era):

- 1st to 6th year AH: The Muslims were busy defending themselves against the aggression of the Makkah forces and their allies.
- 7th to 11th year AH: Islām was propagated through delegations sent to different rulers in different parts of Arabia and the result of this outreach programme is that almost the entire Arabian Peninsula embraced Islām.

To elaborate on this further:

We have said that in Makkah, the Muslims were too few and weak to have used forced to convert anyone. When Rasulullāh (s) and these early Muslims were forced to migrate to Madina, the majority of the Madina Arabs were from the tribes of Aws and Khazraj who invited Rasulullāh (s) to guide them and bring peace between their warring tribes. And in fact the Aws and Khazraj accepted Islām even before Rasulullāh (s) entered Madina, so there was no question of forced conversion.

The other minority residents of Madina were the Jews who were not inclined to accepting Islām. Rasulullāh (s) met with them along with the Muslims and signed a

peace treaty to ensure everyone's rights were secure. The treaty conditions included:

- The Jews who enter into this treaty shall be protected from all insults and harm; they shall have an equal right as the Muslims in being supported.
- The Jews and Muslims shall protect Madina together against any attack from the Makkah enemies.
- The Jews shall practice their religion as freely as the Muslims.
- The allies of the Jews in Madina shall enjoy the same security and freedom.

The Jews were later expelled from Madina because they violated the treaty and plotted with the Makkan and other external Jewish tribes to betray the Muslims in Madina [in the Battle of Ahzāb (Khandaq)]. But they were <u>not</u> forced to become Muslims.

This clearly shows that Rasulullāh (s) did not force people to accept Islām (even though Islām was powerful enough to do that if it wished); rather he promoted peaceful coexistence with followers of other faiths.

The Wars During the Prophet (s)'s Life

Let us briefly look at the major battles in the life of Rasulullāh (s):

<u>2 AH - The Battle of Badr:</u>
Muslims confronted the Makkan forces at Badr - 80 miles from Madina but 200 miles from Makkah. The distance of Badr from Makkah makes it obvious that the Makkans were the aggressors. The Muslims were 313 ill-equipped men and the Makkans were 1000 heavily-armed men.

<u>3 AH - The Battle of Uhud:</u>
Named after a mountain just outside Madina. Makkans came to take revenge for their defeat in Badr. The Muslims were 1000 men the Makkans were 3000.

<u>5 AH - The Battle of Ahzāb (or Khandaq):</u>
The Makkan polytheists, in alliance with the Jews of northern Arabia, surrounded Madina and came to attack the Muslims.

<u>6 AH - The Peace-Treaty of Hudaybiyya:</u>
The polytheists of Makkah agreed to a 10 year peace treaty with the Muslims. They broke this treaty in 3 years by attacking some of the allies of the Muslims. During the 3 year peace, Muslims organized themselves and began sending out delegations (wufud) to different parts of Arabia to invite the tribes and rulers to Islām – all without the use of the sword! The 9th year AH in particular is known as the Year of Delegations ('Aam al-Wufud). In some cases delegations came to Madina to find out

about Islām, such as the Christian delegation from Najrān that led to the incident of Mubāhala and the treaty with the Christians.

7 AH – The Battle of Khaybar:
The Jewish tribes expelled from Madina for their betrayal during the battle of Ahzāb, went to Khaybar where seven Jewish fortresses stood. From there they plotted an attack on Madina. Rasulullāh (s) confronted them before they could attack Madina and Imām Ali ('a) played an important role in conquering the fortresses. After the Jews were defeated, they were not forced to accept Islām.

9 AH - The Conquest of Makkah:
When the Makkans broke the peace treaty, the Muslims marched to Makkah and the Makkans surrendered the city without any bloodshed. For all the suffering that the Makkans had afflicted on Rasulullāh (s), this was the time to take revenge but none was taken and Rasulullāh (s) forgave everyone. He got rid of all idol worship as this was the central message of Islām – to worship none by Allāh. Because the Makkans were idol worshippers, they embraced Islām. Even then, the idol-worshippers of Makkah were given a four months grace period to stay and study Islām. If they were still not convinced of Islām's message, then they were to be asked to leave the holy territory of Makkah but not forced to become Muslims:

In all such cases, we see that neither the sword nor force was used to convert people to Islām. After the demise of Rasulullāh (s), the Muslim rulers gradually conquered Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iran and beyond. But there is a very important point to keep in mind:

It is true that Muslims conquered these neighbouring lands and countries but their aim was not to spread Islām. Their aim was to expand the Arab Empire. All historic accounts of the rulers (especially starting with the Banu Umayya and Banu Abbās onwards) suggest that the Caliphs saw themselves as kings and acted as tyrants. This confirms that the aim of the rulers was to dominate rather than convert. Anyone who converted to Islām did so voluntarily.

Why did these rulers prefer people not to convert to Islām? There was a reason: those who did not become Muslims had to sign a treaty that compelled them to pay an annual tax (called *jizya*) as revenue to the Muslim rulers. Therefore the less people converted, the more wealth they acquired!

In the majority of cities, the inhabitants continued to follow their own religions. The Muslim conquerors signed treaties guaranteeing to the conquered people the freedom to practice their religion as long as they paid the required jizya tax to the caliph's treasury. The Caliphs were not in the business of promoting or spreading the Islāmic faith. They were simply interested in conquering land and ruling over people just like the Roman and Persian Empires before them.

So How did Islām Spread?

Islām spread around the world mostly through the efforts of individual scholars and pious ascetics who travelled to different regions of the world to share the message of Islām. To this day, history records of early Muslim settlers or 'travelling Sufi saints' who went to regions as far as the Himalaya mountains of India and China and the Caribbean Islands and South America.

Consider the following examples:

India: Muslims ruled India for about 800 years, but there never was a Muslim majority in that country. The numbers themselves show that force was not part of the spread of Islām in that region.

Far East: No Muslim army or navy ever landed in Malaysia or Indonesia. Yet even today, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. Islām spread there only through Muslim traders and missionaries. It was the value of Islām to the common people rather than the elite, which caused it to spread in the Far East.

Similar situations in the spread of Islām are recorded for the African continent.

The Ottoman Empire: It was ruled by a Turkish caliph over a complex multi-religious, multi-cultural society. The Ottoman Empire dominated vast region of Christian land in Eastern Europe but it never forced its Christian citizens to convert to Islām; they were given the right to govern their own lives according to their own religious traditions. Greece, a neighbour of Turkey, was colonized by Muslim Turks for about 500 years, but there is not even a sizeable minority of Muslims among the Greeks today and there never was even in the past. In fact, according to some historians, when Greece became independent, many Greeks migrated into the Ottoman Empire because they found them to be better rulers than their own Greek masters.

Syria & Egypt: When Syria was conquered by the Muslims, the Christians had the choice to migrate to other Christian territories. They chose to remain in Syria. This shows there was no compulsion on them to accept Islām. Similarly after the conquests of Egypt, the Muslims allowed the non-Muslims complete liberty in the practice of their religion. In fact, the conversion of countries like Syria, Egypt and Persia to Islām was gradual and spread over more than a century. If Islām had spread through the sword, the conversions to Islām should have followed immediately after the conquests of these regions.

Spain: The Muslims ruled over Spain for some several hundred years. If the sword had been used to spread Islām, all the people of Spain would have been converted to Muslims; this was not the case. Furthermore, the Muslims were eventually expelled from Spain. If everyone in Spain has been forced to accept Islām by the sword, then over the centuries there would have been no Muslims to expel because everyone there would have been a Muslim!

Russia: The Muslims were the dominant power in Russia for over two hundred years. If they had used the sword to convert the people to Islām, there would be no non-Muslim in Russia today. The very fact that the Muslims lost Russia shows that no attempt was made to spread Islām through the sword.

The Mongols: When the Mongols dismantled the Abbāsid Caliphate and occupied the Muslim lands, they held the swords over the heads of the Muslims. Their original aim had been to destroy Islām but they ended up converting to Islām themselves. Although Christianity tried its best to convert the Mongols, they failed and the Mongols accepted Islām. This was not out of any compulsion, but because they were convinced Islām was a superior faith.

Today Islām faces an enemy in form of the biased media. Yet amazingly, in spite of all these hurdles, Islām is still the fastest growing religion in the world. Muslims also have a strong presence in European nations such as the United Kingdom, France and Germany. This speaks volumes about how this religion has spread and is spreading even now.

If the majority of Muslims had followed the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and their teachings then today most people in the world would have no problem accepting Islām. If the Shi’ah have been in minority throughout history, it is not because they are a breakaway sect or wrong but because they have always been suppressed by the non-Shi’ah Muslim rulers of all ages and the true message of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) has not been allowed to reveal itself freely. And sadly, this continues to this day.

Lesson 22-23
Misconceptions about Islám in History (cont'd)

2. Jihād in Islām

Ever since the 9/11 attacks in the USA, Islām has been criticized in the Western media for promoting violence. The attempts have been to convince the public that Islām support terrorism and that 'jihād' is all about killing non-Muslims in the name of Allāh, very similar perhaps to the Crusades when the Pope ordered Christians to attack the Muslim 'infidels' and take over Jerusalem in the name of Jesus.

In order to understand the matter and to be able to defend Islām as our faith, we must first understand what the Qur'ān really says about jihād and Islām's perspective on dealing with non-Muslims. We must also look at the āyāt of Qur'ān that are commonly misquoted by others to 'prove' Islām supports terrorism.

Islām is the Religion of Peace

Islām is primarily a religion of peace. Its name "Islām" comes from *"silm"* which means two things: one is "submitting to God" and the second is "peace". Both meanings are intertwined.

Whenever Muslims meet one another, they use the greeting of peace: "*as-salāmu 'alaykum* — peace be upon you", and the other person responds by saying "*'alaykum as-salām* — upon you be peace."

Peace and Justice in Qur'ān & Hadith

Even when dealing with war enemies, Islām always showed its preference for peace over war.

The Qur'ān commands the Muslims when dealing with their enemies:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلاَ يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَى أَلاَّ تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

O you who believe, be maintainers of justice (and bearer of) witness for (the sake of) Allāh. ***Let not hatred of a people incite you to act unjustly;*** *be just - this is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allāh surely Allāh is aware of what you do.*

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:8

And as far as maintaining a friendship with the non-Muslims is concerned, the Qur'ān commands:

﴿لاَ يَنْهَاكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنْ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ. إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنْ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَى إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

*Allāh does **not** forbid you in regard to those who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes; **that you deal with them with kindness and justice**. Indeed Allāh loves the just. Allāh forbids you **only in regard to those who made war against you** on account of religion and expelled you from your homes and supported [others] in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them - it is they who are the wrongdoers*
- Surah al-Mumtahana, 60:8-9

The very first battle in Islām took place 2 years after Rasulullāh (s) migrated to Madina (i.e. 2 AH) when the Muslims were allowed to take up arms to defend themselves. Even though they were outnumbered and ill-equipped, the Muslims defeated the Makkans and took seventy prisoners of war. The norm among all societies at that time was to either kill the Prisoners-of-War (POWs) or make them slaves. But Rasulullāh (s) instructed the Muslims to treat the POWs humanely; they were brought back safely to Madina and given decent lodging in the houses of the people who had taken them prisoners. The Qur'ān decreed that the POWs must not be ill-treated in any way.

According to a Western biographer of Rasulullāh (s), Sir William Muir, "In pursuance of Mahomet's commands, the citizens of Madina received the prisoners and treated them with much consideration. 'Blessings be on the men of Madina', said one of the prisoners in later days, 'they made us ride, while they themselves walked, they gave us wheaten bread to eat when there was little of it; contenting themselves with dates.'"

The method in which Rasulullāh (s) dealt with the prisoners was revolutionary. The prisoners that were poor were released free; those who came from affluent families of Makkah were returned for a specified ransom. But the most interesting case was of those prisoners who were literate – Rasulullāh (s) made a deal with them that they could go free if they could teach ten Muslim children how to read and write.

Even during battle, the Muslims were given strict rules to abide by:

- Do not kill anyone who is not fighting you in battle, especially those that are elderly and women and children.
- Do not cut down a tree unnecessarily, especially a fruit-bearing tree.

- Do not destroy any crops or burn down any palm-trees.
- Do not poison any water.
- Do not mutilate the bodies of your enemy.
- If the person facing you in battle drops his weapon and turns to flee, do not run after him to kill him.
- Do not harm or kill anyone who surrenders while fighting.

All this was a part of Islām 1400 years ago; long, long before the Geneva Convention.

Islām therefore holds human life as sacred, regardless of whether it is the life of a Muslim or non-Muslim. Muslims may dislike the values, culture or behaviour of the non-Muslims but they are not to hate another human being just because he or she is not a Muslim.

To kill an innocent person is a great crime in Islām, regardless of whether the individual is a Muslim or not. After narrating the story of the two sons of Nabi Adam (‘a) and how Qābil killed is brother Hābil, the Qur’ān says:

﴿... مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ...﴾

Whosoever kills a person without any reason, it is as though he has killed all the people. And whosoever saves a single life, it is as though he has saved all the people.
- Surah al-Māidah, 5:32

Islām does not also allow a Muslim to justify killing an innocent person in any way. For example, some Muslim extremists will kidnap and kill innocent civilians and say, ‘this is in revenge for what the non-Muslim armies or governments did to our fellow Muslims in such-and-such a land.’ But this is not Islām. You cannot kill an innocent non-Muslim just because some other non-Muslims killed an innocent Muslim.

Similarly, suicide bombings against civilians are absolutely forbidden and those who commit it are not martyrs – they will burn in Hellfire for killing the innocent.

The matter of taking someone’s life is very serious in Islām. It is only legislated for certain crimes and that too when it is proven beyond doubt in a legal court of law and the criminal is unrepentant. Besides that, going to war is only permissible if it is in defence of Islām or Muslim lands and property and it must be ordered by a legal and lawful Imām or his representative. No one can take the law in their hands.

So What About Jihād?

Many ignorant and malicious enemies of Islām claiming to be ‘experts’ in Islām try and ‘prove’ that Rasulullāh (s) was, God forbid, ‘a terrorist’ and that Islām teaches

violence and hatred through the Qur'ān. So let us look at the meaning of jihād in Islām and these verses of Qur'ān that they love to misquote.

The Concept of Jihād

The word *jihād* does not mean "holy war". This is a Western term of a broader concept in Islāmic teaching and it has been coined by the Western media to resemble the Roman Catholic 'holy war' or Crusades against the Muslims in the 11th-13th centuries.

In Arabic the word jihād literally means 'striving', 'struggling' or 'working hard'. A 'mujtahid' for example, is one who 'struggles' to find the correct laws in Islām and so he practises *'ijtihād* (a word that shares the same Arabic root verb as jihād). From hadith therefore, we are told that jihād is a religious duty for Muslims and it is of two kinds: minor jihād (*jihād al-asghar*) and major jihād (*jihād al-akbar*).

Minor jihād is a just and legitimate armed struggle that is fought in defence. It does not mean violence, taking the laws in one's hands or a war of aggression that is fought only to occupy the lands of others or take over their resources.

Major jihād is the spiritual struggle that a Muslim undertakes to purify his or her self and it is a battle of the soul and body. It includes fighting the temptation for sin as well as fighting the love for the world and its pleasures (i.e. materialism). Islām expects Muslims to prefer their souls over their bodies and to prefer the life of the Hereafter over this temporary world.

The two terms - major and minor jihād - came about because of an incident when a group of soldiers returned to Madina after an expedition and Rasulullāh (s) said to them, 'welcome back to a group that has returned from the minor jihād and now what awaits them is the major jihād.' The soldiers were surprised and thinking a great battle awaited them asked, 'and what is the major jihād, O Messenger of Allāh?' and he replied, 'jihād against your own selves.'

Jihād in the Qur'ān

The first battle fought by Rasulullāh (s) – the Battle of Badr - was a war of defence. On this occasion, the Qur'ān permitted the Muslims to engage in armed struggle but clearly explained the reason:

﴿أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوا ... الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ...﴾

Permission is granted to those who are fighting because they have been oppressed…those who have been expelled from their homes without any just cause…"

- Surah al-Hajj, 22:39-40

Again, referring to the polytheists of Makkah who waged war after war against Rasulullāh (s) and the Muslims in Madina, the Qur'ān states:

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلاَ تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ﴾

Fight in the way of God those who are fighting against you; and do not exceed (the limits). Verily Allāh does not love those who exceed (the limits)."

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:190

It is clear from these verses that the permission to fight is about responding to a war by defending oneself. There is no talk of initiating aggression at all. Even in the defensive mode of struggle, Allāh warns the Muslims that they should not "exceed" beyond the proper limits.

Islām teaches that Muslims should be strong in order to defend themselves, but that does not mean they have to become aggressive and unjust. This general guideline is given in the following verse:

﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ...﴾

Prepare against them (i.e., the enemy) with whatever force and trained horses you can in order to frighten thereby Allāh's enemy, your enemy, and others besides them who you do not know but Allāh knows them....

- Surah al-Anfāl, 8:60

After giving this general guideline of being strong and prepared to defend themselves, immediately the Qur'ān reminds the Muslims in the next verse:

﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ...﴾

But if they (the enemies) incline to peace, then you (also) incline to it, and put your trust in Allāh…

- Surah al-Anfāl, 8:61

Reading the Qur'ān Out of Context

To read something 'out of context' means to purposely read only part of it because it suits a person's goal to misguide others.

For example, we can take isolated parts of the Bible and show that the Bible preaches 'violence and hate'. Here are examples:

"Take all the leader of these people, kill them." (Numbers 25:7)

“Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.” (Numbers 31:17-18)

“Kill every male and every woman who is not a virgin.” (Judges 21:11)

You can see from the above examples how easy it is to misquote the Bible and ‘prove’ that it preaches terrorism. Yet no decent person will accept such out-of-context presentation of the Biblical verses. Surprisingly, we even see some Christian priests and missionaries do exactly the same with the Qur’ān and without any hesitation.

Here are some examples of Qur’ān verses often misquoted and read out of context. Your teacher may give only one example and ask you to read the rest as homework:

First Example:

﴿وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ...

Kill them wherever you find them....

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:191

To understand the full context of this verse, let us read verses 190 to 193 together:

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلاَ تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ. وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنْ الْقَتْلِ وَلاَ تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ فَإِنْ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ. فَإِنْ انتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ. وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لاَ تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ انتَهَوْا فَلاَ عُدْوَانَ إِلاَّ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

“And fight in the way of God ***those who are fighting against you, and do not exceed the limits****, surely God does not love those who exceed the limits. And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them* ***out from whence they drove you out*** *– persecution is severer than slaughter. And* ***do not fight them*** *at the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah]* ***until they fight with you*** *in it; but* ***if*** *they do fight you,* ***then*** *fight them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers.* ***But if they hold back, then surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.*** *And fight them until there is no persecution and religion should be only for Allāh;* ***but if they hold back, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.****”*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:190-193

When we now read the same words in context, it becomes clear that verse 191 is only allowing the Muslims of Madina to defend themselves against the aggression of

the polytheists of Makkah who expelled them from their homes. It surely does not say that Muslims should go around the world killing any non-Muslim that they find!

Second Example:

﴿فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

So let those fight in the way of Allāh who are willing to sell this world's life for the Hereafter; and whoever fights in the way of Allāh, then be he slain or be he victorious, We shall grant him a mighty reward.

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:74

Those who quote this verse, conveniently leave out the next verse (āyah. 75) that explains the purpose and justification for the minor jihād:

﴿وَمَا لَكُمْ لاَ تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنْ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَل لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَل لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا﴾

*And what is the matter with you that you do not fight in the way of God **for [the sake of] the oppressed men, women, and children** who pray, 'Our Lord, take us out of this town whose people are oppressors, and appoint for us from Thee a guardian and give us from Thee a helper.'*

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:75

These two verses are clearly urging the Muslim to stand up for *the oppressed men, women and children* and should be read together. Should not divine religions defend the oppressed men, women and children?

Third Example:

﴿...فَقَاتِلُوا أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ...﴾

Fight the leaders of unbelief.

- Surah at-Tawbah, 9:12

The words above are just part of the whole passage where Allāh talks about the Muslims in Madina and their peace treaty with the polytheists of Makkah. Now look at the whole context:

﴿وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لاَ أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنتَهُونَ. أَلاَ تُقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ. قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

*And **if they break their oaths after their** agreement and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief – surely their oaths are of no value – so that they may desist. What is the matter with you that you do not fight a people who broke their oaths **and aimed at the expulsion of the Prophet [from Makkah], and they attacked you first?** Do you fear them? But Allāh is most deserving that you should fear Him, if you are believers. "Fight them; Allāh will punish them by your hands and bring them to disgrace, and assist you against them, heal the hearts of a believing people, remove the rage of their hearts, and Allāh turns (mercifully) to whom He pleases, and Allāh is Knowing, Wise.*

- Surah at-Tawbah, 9:12-14

The context clearly gives the right of defence to the Muslim but, in no way, does it promote aggression.

Fourth Example:

﴿... وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً ...﴾

Fight the polytheists all together.

- Surah at-Tawbah, 9:36

In reality, this sentence is part of an entire verse in which God talks about the sacredness of four of the twelve months in which fighting is forbidden. Then it says:

﴿... وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

*And fight the polytheists all together **as they fight you all together**; and know that God is with those who guard (evil).*

- Surah at-Tawbah, 9:36

Of course those who love to misquote the Qur'ān, conveniently miss out the part "as they fight you all together". As you see, this verse is also responding to the aggression started by the polytheists against the Muslims; it does not talk about initiating a war.

Conclusion

From these examples, it is quite clear that Islām is not talking about the minor jihād for the sake of aggression; rather it is allowing the Muslims to physically defend their lives, properties, and lands against any aggression, and also to fight for ending tyranny against the oppressed men, women and children.

Some Christians argue that 'Jesus taught that when someone slaps you, turn the other cheek' and therefore we should not fight those who fight us. But this is not realistic at all. Islām deals with a realistic human society and not with an idealistic society. In the words of Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Muslims view the Christian ethics as being too sublime for ordinary human beings to follow; it seems that the injunction to turn the other cheek was being meant only for saints. Christian people over the centuries have not shown any more restraint in war than have non-Christians. The ideal preached and the practice followed has often little to do with each other."[40]

Misuse of "Jihād"

It is also important to note that just because the term "jihād" is misused by the media and some politicians, Muslims should not be ashamed to say that fighting in the way of Allāh can be necessary and valid at times. We neither need to abandon this noble concept of our faith nor be ashamed or apologetic about it.

While talking to non-Muslims about jihād, many Muslims will only describe the major (spiritual) jihād and shy away from mentioning the minor jihād in the sense of armed struggle for defence. As Muslims, we must stand by the teachings of Islām. Some misguided people may have hijacked the term but we must not reject even the minor Jihād in principle. Instead we should distinguish it by explaining when it is applicable (i.e. defence) as opposed to aggression and acts of terrorism.

The hijack of the term 'jihād' has not just been done by al-Qaida and the Talibān. Even governments like the United States have misused it for their own political interests. For example, during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the U.S. Agency for International Development spent millions of dollars to supply Afghan school children with textbooks filled with violent images and "militant Islāmic" teachings. Published in the dominant Afghan languages of Dari and Pashtu, these textbooks were developed in the early 1980s under an 'Aid grant' to the University of Nebraska-Omaha and its Centre for Afghanistan Studies. The agency spent $51 million dollars on the university's education programs in Afghanistan from 1984 to 1994.

The books, which were filled with talk of jihād and featured drawings of guns, bullets, soldiers and mines, have served since then as the Afghan school system's

[40] Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Peace & Jihād in Islām*, p. 9.

core curriculum. Unlike the children in the rest of the world whose math textbooks have pictures of apples and oranges, the Afghan children were taught to count with illustrations showing tanks, missiles and land mines.[41]

And so when it suited its strategic interests, the United States of America promoted the culture of jihād among the Afghan children in the 1980s (so that they would fight the Soviets) and President Reagan even welcomed the Afghan "mujāhideen" in the While House. Now that that culture of violence has come to haunt it, the US administration is absolutely against the idea of jihād and expects Muslims to abandon that concept in totality.

Muslims cannot be expected to change their views on the noble concept of jihād just because of some misguided Muslims or some world powers misuse the term. Muslims should strongly condemn the misuse of jihād and confidently affirm the concept of jihād as explained in the Qur'ān and the noble examples of Prophet Muhammad (s).

Media & Stereotyping the Muslims

Time and again we hear in the news of a Muslim who committed an act of terrorism. How should we respond to this? Our response is that the individual or group who committed it should be condemned without highlighting his or their religion. Targeting the Muslims or the Arabs based on guilt-by-association is absolutely wrong.

There is also a double standard in the media: When a bomb exploded in early days of September 2001 in Northern Ireland near a Catholic school in a Protestant neighbourhood, no one in the media blamed the entire Protestant community as "terrorists and murderers" even though it was in the same month as the 9/11 attacks. When the IRA committed acts of terror in Northern Ireland or United Kingdom, no one in the Western media labelled the Catholic faith "as the religion of terrorism". When Dr. Goldstein, a Jewish settler in Israel, entered the mosque in Hebron a few years ago and gunned down Palestinian worshippers, no one said that all Jewish people are "terrorists". When Serbians brutally massacred Muslims in Bosnia, the media never blamed the Serbian Orthodox Church for it even though some priests of that church used to bless the Serbian militia before they embarked on executing the Muslim prisoners. Yet we see that when a few Arabs or Muslims commit acts of terror, all the Muslims and all the Arabs are automatically branded as "terrorists and murderers." This is of course unfair.

[41] Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Peace & Jihād in Islām*, p. 10-11.

Lesson 24-25
Misconceptions about Islám in History (cont'd)

3. The Marriages of Rasulullāh (s)

One of the most common myths against Islām is regarding Rasulullāh (s)'s many wives.

Polygamy in History

Rasulullāh (s) did not invent the system of polygamy. It existed long before the Qur'ān was revealed. The Bible says that Lamech, the grandson of Adam, "took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah."[42] So polygamy has existed from the earliest days of human history.

Many holy personalities of the Bible had many wives at the same time. Abraham (Nabi Ibrāhim ('a)) had Sarah and Hajar. Abraham was first blessed with a son through Hajar whom he named Ishmael (Nabi Ismāil ('a)), and then he was blessed with another son through Sarah whom he named Isaac (Nabi Ishāq ('a)).

Jacob (Nabi Ya'qub ('a)) had four wives: Leah and Rachel (both were Jacob's cousins), and he also had Bilhah and Zilpah (both were servant-girls given to Jacob by his wives). It is from these four ladies that Jacob had twelve sons who became ancestors of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

David (Nabi Dāwud ('a)) had at least eight wives whose names are known, he had many others whose names have not been recorded. The Second Book of Samuel (in the Bible) talks about "the wives" of David in Hebron and also in Jerusalem.[43][4]

When Rasulullāh (s) began preaching Islām, polygamy was a way of life. It wasn't about pleasure but a part of the social structure. People depended on having many children to help them on their farms and other responsibilities; having more than one wife, each with several children, was common.

Islām did however observe that often men who were wealthy would marry very many wives and then treat them unjustly or compete to have many wives simply as a show of power. It therefore modified and reformed the system, limiting the number of wives a man could have to only four.

[42] The Book of Genesis, 4:19
[43] 2 Samuel 3:2-5, 13-16; 5:13-16.

Thereafter Islām also put strict conditions on a man who wanted to marry more than one wife: he must be able to provide and maintain the family, and also deal with all his wives with justice and fairness. He cannot neglect any of them or show preference for one over the other. The Qur'ān therefore cautions men:

﴿...فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلاَّ تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً ...﴾

...but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one…
- Surah an-Nisā, 4:3

The only exceptions to this rule were the prophets and messengers of Allāh. They were permitted to marry even more than four wives and in the case of Rasulullāh (s) we shall explain why he did this, for each one of his wives.

There are several psychological and social reasons that Islāmic scholars have discussed to explain why Islām has permitted polygamy and why it is a more natural solution to problems in society and less damaging to families than having nightclubs, massage parlours, prostitution, and married men having affairs, and so on. These scholars have also discussed why Islām has not permitted polygamy for women but of course this is all a lengthy discussion and a digression from our subject i.e. the marriages of Rasulullāh (s). Anyone interested in the concept of polygamy in Islām can find lots of resources on the internet.

The Prophet's Marriages

The accusation by the enemies of Islām that Rasulullāh (s) had many wives only for pleasure and power is not new. In fact, if we read the Bible carefully we will see that no prophet was ever spared from some accusation or the other. According to the Bible, Nabi Lut ('a)'s daughters got him drunk and then committed incest with him (*wal iyādhu billāh – we seek refuge with Allāh from such blasphemy*). The Bible also talks of Nabi Isa ('a) converting water into wine for people to drink at a party (*wal iyādhu billāh*). These are all lies that were brought into scriptures in order to damage the reputation of the Prophets of Allāh, peace be on them. And therefore the accusations against Rasulullāh (s) as being a 'terrorist' or 'womanizer' (*wal iyādhu billāh*) should not surprise us.

If any sincere person takes the time to study the life of Rasulullāh (s) carefully, they will see that he was a man of the highest character even long before he started preaching Islām.

At the age of twenty-five, Rasulullāh (s) married a famous and a highly respected lady of Makkah, by the name of Khadija bint Khuwaylid, who was either the same age as Rasulullāh (s) or just two years older than him. Some writers have falsely

suggested that she was 15 years older than Rasulullāh (s) i.e. 40 years old while he was 25, but this has been proven wrong by Muslim researchers.[44]

What is important for our discussion is that Rasulullāh (s) remained married to one wife only - Sayyida Khadija (‘a) - for twenty-five years until she passed away in Makkah. Two years after her demise, Rasulullāh (s) migrated from Makkah to Madina.

So until the age of 52, Rasulullāh (s) had only one wife, Sayyida Khadīja, whom he loved dearly and who was one of the strongest pillars of support in promoting his cause. It was only during the last 11 years of his life that he married other wives. To summarize:

- From birth to age 25: single.
- From age 25 to age 52: married to one wife, Sayyida Khadija (‘a).
- From age 52 to age 63: married ten wives.

The Other Wives

During the last eleven years of his life, Rasulullāh (s) married ten wives. This has become an easy target for anti-Muslim writers and speakers who would like to tarnish the image of Rasulullāh (s) and portray him as someone who was driven by desires.

If Rasulullāh (s) was a man of uncontrollable desires, then why did he not marry any other woman when he was young and wealthy and lived in a society that accepted unlimited polygamous relationships (i.e. before he began preaching Islām)? Why did he not marry any other woman as long as Sayyida Khadija (‘a) was alive even though it was the prime time of his youth and it was acceptable in society?

We must therefore realize that there must have been good reasons behind the other marriages of Rasulullāh (s) during the last eleven years of his life. And indeed, there were very good reasons as we shall explain below.

We can categorize Rasulullāh (s)’s marriages in Madina into different reasons, keeping in mind that some marriages could fall under more than one reason.

First Reason: To Provide Protection & Dignity to Widows so that Others May Follow That Example.

It is important to remember that 1400 years ago, women never went out of their homes to earn a living. They were completely dependent on a male family member to look after them. That is why as soon as a woman was divorced or widowed, she

[44] For references that prove this, see: Sayyid Rizvi, *Polygamy and Marriages of the Prophet*, p. 5.

would marry another man so that she had someone to provide her shelter and the necessities of life.

Another point to remember is that 1400 years ago people were not protected by a government but rather by their tribes. And if someone married a woman from another tribe, the "in-law tribe" would treat him like family and also offer him protection or at least not fight him without good reason.

Examples of such widows whom Rasulullāh (s) married were:

1. Sawdah bint Zam'ah: A Muslim lady whose husband had died in Abyssinia. When she returned to Makkah, she was a widow and her father and brother were polytheists and also enemies of Islām. She could not seek shelter with them. They were so opposed to Islām that they were willing to even torture her to death for accepting Islām. Rasulullāh (s), now a widower himself, married Sawdah in order to provide protection to her as well as to forge an important link of kinship with his opponents.

2. Zaynab bint Khuzaymah: a widow for the second time when her second husband 'Abd Allāh b. Jahsh was martyred in the Battle of Uhud. She was known for her generosity, and was famous as "Umm al-Masākīn" (Mother of the Poor). Now she herself faced hard times. Rasulullāh (s) wanted to maintain her prestige, and so he married her in the 3rd year AH. She died less than a year after this marriage.

3. Umm Salamah. She was first married to 'Abd Allāh Abu Salamah. She migrated to Abyssinia with her husband. She was known for her piety and wisdom. When she became a widow and had orphan children, Rasulullāh (s) married her in the 4th year AH. She was also the sister of the chief of Makhzum - a powerful Makkan tribe. This marriage had the element of forging the link of kinship with his opponents in Makkah.

Second Reason: To Set the Slaves Free

4. Juwayriyyah bint al-Hārith. After the Battle of Banu Mustaliq in the 5th year AH, the Muslims took two hundred families of that tribe as captives. By law, since they were not Muslims and had fought the Muslims in aggression, they would become slaves to the Muslims. Juwayriyyah, the daughter of the chief of that tribe, had become a widow. Rasulullāh (s) set her free and married her. Why? Because the Muslims, who had made the two hundred families of Banu Mustaliq their slaves, realized that by Juwayriyyah's marriage to Rasulullāh (s), all these two hundred families were now related to Rasulullāh (s) by marriage. Out of courtesy to Rasulullāh (s), the Muslims set them all free so that the 'in-laws' of Rasulullāh (s) would not be slaves. Impressed by this nobility, the whole tribe of Banu Mustaliq became Muslim. By this marriage, Rasulullāh (s) was able to transform a hostile tribe into an ally.

Third Reason: To Forge Friendly Relations for the Sake of Islām

5. ‘Āisha bint Abi Bakr. She was the daughter of Abu Bakr, who later became the first caliph of the Muslims. Although the engagement was done in Makkah, she came into the household of Rasulullāh (s) after his migration to Madina. She was the youngest wife of Rasulullāh (s). The media likes to say that the Prophet (s) married a young child of 9 years old. That is not true. ‘Āisha was between the age of 16 and 19, an age when one is considered to be an adult in many cultures even today.[45] The engagement of Rasulullāh (s) to ‘Āisha in Makkah sealed the alliance with her father Abu Bakr so that he would be on the side of Muslims during the confrontation against the idol-worshippers of Makkah.

6. Hafsa bint ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb. She was the daughter of ‘Umar who later became the second caliph of the Muslims. She became a widow after her husband was killed in the Battle of Badr. Rasulullāh (s) married her in the 4th year AH on the request of her father. This marriage was also to seal Rasulullāh (s)’s alliance with ‘Umar.

7. Umm Habiba, daughter of Abu Sufyān. She was married to ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Jahsh and had migrated to Abyssinia. He became a Christian; while she continued the Islāmic faith and separated from him. Her father Abu Sufyān was the leader of the polytheist Quraysh tribe that ruled Makkah and he was a bitter enemy of Islām and constantly fought against Muslims. When she returned to Madina, Rasulullāh (s) married her in order to provide protection for her and also to soften the heart of Abu Sufyān. However, this marriage did not have the desired effect on Abu Sufyān.

8. Safiyya bint Huyaiy b. Akhtab. She was the daughter of the chief of Banu Nadhir, a Jewish tribe of Khaybar. She became a widow when her husband was killed in the Battle of Khaybar. She was taken as a captive by the Muslim forces. Rasulullāh (s) married her in the 7th year AH to maintain her noble status and also to establish marriage ties with her Jewish tribe.

Fourth Reason: The Desire to be Related to Rasulullāh (s)

9. Maymuna bint al-Hārith al-Hilāliyyah. Her second husband died in 7 AH. She came to Rasulullāh (s) and offered herself to him in marriage if he would accept her. She only desired the honour of being called “the wife of Rasulullāh (s)”. Rasulullāh (s) (based on verse 33:50 of the Qur’ān) accepted her as his wife.

Fifth Reason: To Break a Taboo & Set an Example

[45] For proofs on the age of ‘Aisha, see Sayyid Rizvi, *Polygamy and Marriages of the Prophet*, p. 8.

10. Zaynab bint Jahsh. She was a cousin of Rasulullāh (s); and she was a widow and a divorcee. The circumstance of her marriage to Rasulullāh (s) was very unusual. To show that Islām treated all humans equally and a white Arab had no greater distinction before Allāh than a black slave, except on the basis of piety, Rasulullāh (s) had originally arranged for Zaynab bint Jahsh to marry Zayd b. Hāritha, who was a freed slave and raised by Rasulullāh (s) as his adopted son.

    The marriage of Zaynab to Zayd did not last however and in time, they broke up and had a divorce.

    At the same time, because Zayd was raised by Rasulullāh (s) as an adopted child, people used to call him 'Zayd b. Muhammad'. Allāh revealed verses 4 and 5 of Surah 33 (Surah al-Ahzāb) to say that an adopted child is not like a biological child and should not be called by the name of the adopted father but by his own biological father's name. This was to ensure that matters related to marriage and inheritance do not become mixed up.

    Thereafter, to ensure that the prevailing system of adoption was removed and to emphasize that Islām does not recognize an adopted child to be exactly the same as a biological child, Allāh commanded Rasulullāh (s) to marry Zaynab bint Jahsh.

    Zayd was now called Zayd b. Hāritha i.e. by the name of his biological father and the marriage of Rasulullāh (s) to Zaynab bint Jahsh left a clear example for Muslims that Islām does not recognize adoptions in the sense that other cultures do because otherwise it would have been forbidden for Rasulullāh (s) to marry his "daughter-in-law".

    Of course Islām highly encourages looking after orphans but without assuming them to be related like a blood relationship that affects marriage, inheritance, mahram and non-mahram, etc.

Conclusion

When Rasulullāh (s) was young and wealthy, he had only one wife. But in the last eleven years of his life when he was over fifty, he married different wives. With the exception of one ('Āisha), they were all widows and old.

It is also an established fact that even when Rasulullāh (s) had these other wives, his love for his first wife, Sayyida Khadija ('a), never diminished. Al-Bukhāri, quotes the youngest of his wives, 'Ā'isha as saying the following:

"I did not feel jealous of any of the wives of Rasulullāh (s) as much as I did of Khadīja...[46] because Rasulullāh (s) used to (remember and) mention her very often. And whenever he slaughtered a sheep, he would send (the choicest parts) to Khadīja's family. When I sometimes said to him, 'It appears that Khadīja was the only woman in the world,' Rasulullāh (s) would say, 'Khadīja was such-and-such, and from her I had children.'"[47]

In another narration, according to al-Bukhāri, 'Ā'isha reports: "Once Hālah, the sister of Khadīja, asked permission to enter the house." Upon hearing Hālah's voice, which sounded very similar to that of Khadīja, Rasulullāh (s) remembered her beloved wife." 'Ā'isha says, "I became jealous and said, 'What makes you remember an old woman amongst the old women of Quraysh, an old toothless woman who died long ago, while God has given you somebody better than her?'"

Rasulullāh (s) became visibly upset, and he said, "By Allāh, I do not have anyone better than Khadīja. She believed in me when others were covered with disbelief. She testified to my truth when other rejected my claim. She helped me with her wealth when others deprived me. And Allāh gave me children by her."[48]

These sentiments of Rasulullāh (s), expressed to the youngest of his wives, clearly show that for him, Sayyida Khadīja was still the First Lady of Islām. All the other marriages had some social, political or religious reasons behind them. These marriages were not based on lust and passion, as many enemies of Islām would like the world to believe.

[46] Who passed away well before 'Āisha came to the house of Rasulullāh (s).
[47] Bukhāri, *Sahih*, v. 5 p. 104.
[48] Ibid; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, v. 6 p. 117-118, 150; *Sahih* Tirmidhi; Ibn Kathir.

Lesson 26-28
Misconceptions about Islám in History (cont'd)

4. Slavery & Islām

Slavery is one of the oldest evils of society and has existed since the time of ancient civilizations. As we shall see in this lesson, not only is it untrue that Islām encouraged slavery but in fact, Islām is the only faith that was able to attack the very foundations of this evil. Yet it is ironic that the same people who nourished slavery, supported it, and derived benefit from it, later became champions of its abolition and accused Muslims and Arabs of engaging in slave trade.

Slavery in Ancient Times

Some of the earliest civilizations that practised slavery were the Greeks, the Persians, the Romans and the Jews, and later even the Christians.

During the time of the Romans, a slave was the personal property of his master who could do as he pleased with the slave and had full power over the slave's life and even death.

In Persia the palace of the Emperor had twelve thousand female slaves. When the Byzantine Emperor sat on the throne, thousands of slaves remained in attendance with full attention and hundreds of them bowed when he bent to put on his shoes. In Greece, the number of slaves was far greater than the number of free men, although Greece had produced great advocates of humanity and justice. Every army that won a battle would take its prisoners and their families as slaves and personal property.

At the time when Rasulullāh (s) was preaching Islām (in 7th century CE) slavery was rampant throughout India, Persia, Rome, the Arabian Peninsula, Romania and Greece. The elite and educated class of these countries did not regard the slaves eligible even for basic human rights. A slave was regarded as a commodity not worthier than cattle. Often he was sold cheaper than sheep and goat. On special social occasions the distinguished citizens of the State used to get together with the Head of the State to watch the gladiator-like games in which the slaves were made to fight with swords and spears just as in shows of animal-fights. The people cheered until one of the fighters was killed. The audience would then applaud the winner heartily.[49]

[49] Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, v. 3 p. 397 (New York, 1950).

Christianity and Slavery

Though slavery was an ancient practice, it is safe to say that this trade reached its peak through the Christian nations of Europe and America who, as is their nature, turned it into a meticulously organized commerce and started capturing slaves by thousands to be used as manpower in their newly acquired colonies.

It is well known that when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, it did not condemn slavery and in fact the churches participated in slave-trade. In the name of Almighty God, their priests blessed the ships carrying human cargo to faraway lands and admonished the slaves to be obedient, but never urged the masters to be kind. As late as August 1970, the Roman Catholics purchased 1500 Indian girls at a price ranging from 250-300 British Pounds each, to be kept in convents because European girls did not like to live as nuns. When there was much outcry and the Vatican was asked to investigate this, they condemned the newspaper that published the article. Though, a Vatican spokesman admitted there was an "element of truth" to the report.[50]

The following quotation graphically shows the attitude of early Islām and Christianity on the subject of slavery and race:

> "Take away the Negro! I can have no discussion with him," exclaimed the Christian Archbishop Cyrus when the Arab conquerors had sent a deputation of their ablest men to discuss terms of surrender of the capital of Egypt, headed by a 'negro' (i.e. black man) 'Ubaydah as the ablest of them all. To the sacred Archbishop's astonishment, he was told that this man was commissioned by General 'Amr; that the Moslems held black men and white men in equal respect judging a man by his character and not by his colour.[51]

Islām Attacks Slavery

Before Islām came to Arabia, the Arabs were as bad offenders as their neighbours. Slaves were a commercial commodity, and slavery was an established institution. It was a source of livelihood for thousands and a source of labour for tens of thousands. To the elite, the number of slaves in the household was a symbol of status.

Slavery offended the spirit of Islām as much as idolatry did. But while the latter had its roots in spiritualism and hence could be countered by reason, slavery had its roots in commerce, in social structure, and in agriculture undertakings; and reason alone was a weak weapon against something so deeply rooted. How was Islām going to eradicate slavery?

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[50] *Sunday Times* (London) as quoted in the *East African Standard* Newspaper (Nairobi, Kenya, August, 25, 1970).
[51] Leeder, S.S., *Veiled Mysteries of Egypt* p.332 (London, 1912).

The ill-informed may suggest that Rasulullāh (s) could have used force. But the ineffectiveness of force is well recognised by any intelligent student of sociology and history. Force may achieve submission but in the end it only achieves hostility. Sometimes the hostility is even more evil than what was removed. A good example of this is the plight of the blacks in America who, even after the 'emancipation of slaves' in 1862, found the attitude of their former white masters towards them had not changed. To this day, the blacks in America complain that they are denied full human rights and opportunities as the white Americans in some States of the US.

Islām's war against slavery aimed at changing the *attitude and mentality* of the whole society, so that after emancipation, slaves would become full-fledged members of society without any need of demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience and racial riots. And Islām achieved this seemingly impossible objective without any war. To say that Islām waged no war against slavery would not be a true statement. A war it waged, but a war in which neither sword was resorted to, nor was blood spilled.

Islām used three approaches to fight slavery.

Firstly, Islām placed restrictions on acquiring slaves. Prior to Islām, slavery was practised freely. If you couldn't pay your debt, you were made a slave to the Creditor. War captives were either killed or made slaves. In weaker nations, people were hunted like animals, killed or captured and reduced to slavery. Islām, very clearly forbade its followers to enslave people on any excuse. The only exception was a polytheist enemy captured in a war that was fought either in self-defence or with the permission of the Prophet (s) or his rightful successors (but not wars of aggression, such as to capture land or overcome weaker nations for more power). This exception was, in words of Ameer Ali, "in order to serve as guarantee for the preservation of the lives of the captives."[52]

Thereafter, even for the slaves captured in a just war, the Qur'ān encouraged letting them go by saying, "*to let the captives go free, either with or without any ransom*" (Qur'ān 47:4). In the battles forced upon the Muslims, Rasulullāh (s) ordered very humane treatment of the prisoners who fell into Muslim hands. They could purchase their freedom on payment of small sums of money, and some of them were left off without any payment. The captives of the very first Islāmic battle, Badr, were freed on ransom (in form of money or work like teaching ten Muslim children how to read and write), while those of the tribe of Tay were freed without any ransom.

Other conditions were set: even when it was allowed to take someone as a slave, a mother was not to be separated from her child or brother from brother nor husband from wife or one member of a clan from his clan. The Prophet (s) and the first Imām, Ali bin Abi Tālib ('a) prescribed severe penalties for anyone who took a free man into slavery.

[52] Ameer Ali, *Muhammadan Law*, vol.2, p.31.

Slavery by purchase was unknown even after Rasulullāh (s) until the Banu Umayya came to power and Mu'āwiya b. Abu Sufyān declared himself the first 'King' in Islām and introduced the practice of acquiring slaves by purchase again. During the reign of the early Banu Abbās caliphs, Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) is known to have preached against slavery, and his views were adopted by the Mu'tazilites. Thus we see that the earnest attempt of Islām to stop its followers from acquiring new slaves was foiled by the Banu Umayya.

The second approach Islām used to fight slavery was to actively campaign the freeing of slaves. Many hadith tell us that freeing a slave brings forgiveness for sins. In some cases, the kaffāra (expiation or 'punishment') for some sins was to free a slave. For example, if a man breaks his fast in the month of Ramadan intentionally, his kaffāra was to free a slave for each day of missed fast. If a person makes a vow (nadhr) and then does not fulfill it, they had to free a slave. If a woman tears her clothes out of grief and rage, she had to make up for it by freeing a slave. If a person killed someone by accident (manslaughter) the kaffāra was to free a slave.

All these examples show us that Islām wanted to free slaves on any excuse it could find. Our books of hadith have laws about freeing slaves (such as the above examples) but there are no āyāt of Qur'ān or ahādith on the recommendation or even rules of purchasing slaves!

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) taught that if a slave is a Muslim and has worked for seven years then he should be set free. Forcing him to work after seven years is not permissible. It is because of this tradition *(hadith)* that the religious scholars are of the opinion that freeing the slave after seven years is a highly recommended deed.

To set an example for others, Imām Ali purchased and freed one thousand slaves, from his own money. The seventh Imām, Musa al-Kādhim ('a) freed the same number. The fourth Imām, Ali bin al-Husayn Zayn al-Abidin ('a) used to free every slave in his house on the eve of 'Eid. The result was that when people imitated the Imāms and freed slaves by their own freewill, there was no hostility against the slaves because it was not imposed and forced on them by the State (as in the case of the slaves in America).

The Imāms also set an example to others by ensuring that the slaves who were in their home were treated like their own family members and when they were freed, they were given sufficient means to earn their livelihood respectably. Often times, because of the kind treatment of slaves, even when they were freed, the slaves did not want to leave their masters and requested to continue living in their homes as family members.

The third approach that Islām used to fight slavery was to restore the dignity of a slave as a human being and even enhanced their social status. Islām made no distinction between a slave and a free man, and all were treated with equality. Even when they stood in prayer, a slave and his master stood side-by-side, shoulder to shoulder. It was this fact that always attracted slaves to Islām. We saw in the

previous lesson how Rasulullāh (s) married his freed slave Zayd to his cousin Zaynab bint Jahsh.

This is something for Muslims to be proud of because to this day there are countries and religions where people are placed in 'classes' and the 'lower class' are not allowed to mingle with the 'upper class'. In Book 11 we saw that one of the reasons that the Quraysh did not want Imām Ali ('a) to be the Caliph was because he treated the Persians and other non-Arabs as equals to the Arabs and he gave credit and positions of authority to people only on the basis of taqwa (God-consciousness). May of the Muslim rulers after Rasulullāh (s) unfortunately had the pre-Islāmic mentality of the Quraysh, that the Arabs were superior to the rest of mankind even if they were Muslims.

Islām recognises no distinction of race or colour, black or white, citizens or soldiers, rulers or subjects, male or female; they are perfectly equal, not in theory only, but in practice. The first *mu'adhdhin* of Islām, a devoted follower of Rasulullāh (s), was a black slave – Bilāl al-Habashi (the Ethiopian).

The Qur'ān lays down the measure of superiority in Islām:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

O humankind! We have created you of a male and a female, and then We made you (into different) races and tribes so that you may get to know each other. Surely the most honourable of you with Allāh is the one who is most pious among you; surely Allāh is All-Knowing and Aware.

- Surah al-Hujurāt, 49:13

In other words, the only one criterion of superiority or honour of one human being over another is that of taqwa (God-consciousness), which is shown by complete obedience to Allāh. All other man-made distinctions of race and colour have no recognition and place in Islām.

In his famous sermon in 'Arafah, on 9th Dhul Hijjah 9 AH, during his last pilgrimage, Rasulullāh (s) said, "...and your slaves, see that you feed them such food as you eat yourselves and dress him with what you yourself dress. And if they commit a mistake which you are not inclined to forgive then give them away, for they are the servants of Allāh and are not to be tormented..."

Another distinction in Islām is that the established practice in all nations was that a slave who committed a crime was punished more severely than his master. In Islām, the legal punishment (*hudúd*) for a slave was always half of the punishment of a free man.

Rasulullāh (s) always asked his followers to treat their slaves like family-members and his own household set this example first. Fātima, the Prophet (s)'s daughter, had a slave maid called Fidda. Sayyida Fātima ('a) would share all the housework with her such that she would work one day while Fidda rested and Fidda would work the next day and she would rest.

Imām Ali ('a) had a slave named Qanbar. He once took him shopping and bought two shirts, a cheap coarse one and an expensive one. Then he gave the expensive one to Qanbar. When Qanbar expressed shock at this and asked Imām Ali ('a) why he gave him the expensive shirt, Imām Ali ('a) did not make him feel inferior by saying, 'you are my slave and I wanted to be kind to you.' Instead he said to him, 'no, Qanbar, you are a young man and I am old. It is more right that the young should dress better.' There is no example of such kindness to slaves in the history of mankind!

All the Imāms insisted that when they sat to eat, all the slaves and maids in the house would sit with them and eat together at the same table. Incidents of this are well recorded from their lives where other strangers would even protest at this and the Imāms would refuse to eat without the slaves because, they upheld, 'before God, we are all equal.'[53]

Muslims were forbidden to call their slaves by degrading names. Instead Muslims would call their male slaves 'young man' (*ghulām*) and the female slaves 'young lady' (*jāriya*).

Some of the most famous companions of Rasulullāh (s) who were once slaves and then freed include: Salmān al-Fārisi, Zayd b. Hāritha (adopted son of Rasulullāh (s)), Ammār Yāsir, Maytham at-Tammār and Bilāl al-Habashi.

This is the end of the Lesson. The notes below are for the student's personal reading and may be given as homework followed by an assignment to write an essay. Much of this lesson on slavery has been taken from the book by Sayyid Akhtar Rizvi, "Slavery from Islāmic and Christian Perspectives" (http://www.al-Islām.org/slavery/).

Additional Review Material on the History of Slavery

The Origins of Black Slavery

After Columbus discovered the "New World" in 1492, England, France, Holland and other European nations began claiming the new lands as their own colonies and as they discovered rich resources like cotton, tobacco and sugar in these lands of Africa

[53] As in the case of Imām Ali b. Musa ar-Ridā ('a) when he was being taken from Madina to Khorāsān and he would insist that the slaves sit and eat with them during the journey.

and India, they began realizing they needed manpower to work on the plantations to labour for them and produce these resources for their consumption.

The slave trade in West Africa was totally dominated by the Christians while the slave trade in East Africa was carried out with support and help from some Muslim Arab merchants, who unfortunately ignored the teachings of Islām and worked for the European masters for profit. But there were no Muslim Imāms or Shaykhs to encourage or bless this trade. What is most ironic is that when Western historians write about the Christian slave trade, they refer to it as the 'West Africa' or 'Atlantic' slave trade but when they refer to the slave trade in East Africa, they call it the 'Arab' or 'Muslim' slave trade. We saw this hypocrisy in a previous lesson as well when discussing terrorism and the attempts of the media to associate it to Islām when a Muslim commits violence.

The British in particular had colonized India, parts of the Caribbean and parts of Africa. They captured large number of slaves from Africa and shipped them to the Caribbean to labour on their tobacco and sugar plantations. This slave trade was 'booming business' in the 16th and 17th centuries. In time, as the British and French came to the Americas, slaves were brought to North, Central and South America to work in gold and silver mines as well as other plantations there. This notorious commerce in human beings lasted altogether for more than four hundred years, with the Atlantic slave-trade continuing until the late 1870's.

When the slaves were captured, they were forcibly separated from their families, shackled with chains and packed like sardines on the ships that took them across the Atlantic to work in a land they had never seen and to live amongst people whose language and culture they didn't understand. In other words, they lost everything and became tormented slaves overnight. Any resistance was met with severe brutality and oppression. Those who could not survive the whips and died were simply tossed overboard into the ocean.

From the time of the arrival of the Christian Europeans to Africa until 1600, about one million Africans were carried away in slave-ships. At one period, the Portuguese were the chief slave-traders in West Africa. They either took Africans to Brazil, which they had colonized, or they sold them to the Spanish settlers in Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean Islands. In the 17th century, some seven to eight million West Africans found their way across the Atlantic. The Dutch joined the Portuguese as the leading slave-traders in the 17th century, and in the following century the British were the biggest slave-traders. By the time the Atlantic slave-trade was at its height in the 18th century, British ships were carrying more than half of the total of slaves, leaving the rest to be divided up between the Dutch, the French, the Portuguese and the Danes.

By the 19th century, there was another change of the people who took the leading role in exploiting Africa. It was not European countries themselves but the Europeans who had settled in North America (i.e. the 'Americans') who were the ones who organized a large part of the trade. The Americans had recently gained

their independence from Britain and they played the biggest part in the last fifty years of the Atlantic slave-trade, taking away slaves at a greater rate than ever before.

The Christian priests knew about the suffering that was inflicted on people in Africa, on the slave-ships and on the slave-plantations of the Americas, but they remained silent. Many priests themselves carried on slave-trading, especially in Angola, and many others owned slaves in the Americas. The reason the Catholic Church justified slavery was because it gave them the opportunity to "save African souls" by baptising the slaves into Christianity. This was also similar to what the priests did with the Native Americans in Canada and the USA. According to one writer on the subject, Rodney, Walter, "there is no part of the history of the Christian Church which was more disgraceful than its support of the Atlantic slave-trade."[54]

It is true that there were a few individuals who protested against the Atlantic slave-trade but governments and traders paid no attention to them during the 15-17th centuries. It was not until the late 18th century that serious attempts were made to put a stop to this trade.

East African Slave-Trade

Like West Africa, the slave-trade in East Africa became prominent and was firmly established with the advance and endeavour of the Christian Europe. But this was not prominent until the 18th century when the Portuguese used the help of the Arabs to exploit the slave-trade in East Africa.

There was a lot of competition amongst the European nations in West Africa so the trade expanded to East Africa. Attempts have been made to blame the Arabs for the East Africa slave trade and to this day, on the island of Zanzibar (off the coast of Tanzania, East Africa), there is a Church that shows tourists the dungeons where the 'Muslim Arabs' kept slaves in pitiful conditions. What they conveniently forget to mention is that these slaves were held as cargo to be shipped to the Christian Europeans and that these greedy Arabs were only middlemen serving their well-paying masters.

The Sufferings of Slaves

We have already seen what Islām did to alleviate the plight of the slaves and how, for the first and last time in human history, slaves were regarded as human beings having rights. Now let us see how the Europeans captured and treated their slaves from Africa.

[54] Walter Rodney, *West African and the Atlantic Slave-Trade* (1967), p. 22.

The poor natives of Africa were captured in the cruellest of ways, separated from their families, carried away and treated worse than animals. The methods used by the slave hunters were crude and wasteful, because they were robbers, not warriors. Their practice was to surround some villages that they have marked down for their prey, and approach it silently at night. The village was usually a collection of primitive mud huts thatched with bamboo's and palm leaves, all highly inflammable, which they set alight without any guilt, generally at dawn. As the inhabitants woke to the crackling of flames and struggled into the open, they were rounded up and made prisoners.

Any of them who resisted were cut down, as the slave hunters had no mercy for them. They had no use for the old or infirm or for babies who were all killed on the spot, and only men and women in their prime and young boys and girls were spared, to be carried off into slavery, leaving behind the dead bodies and dying ashes, where once there had been happy homes and flourishing settlements. The waste was out of all proportion, from its first moments to the last.

Those captured far inland were less fortunate, for they had to march to the coast on their feet over many miles of thick forest and rough desert. They walked almost naked, with no protection against sharp thorns, and jagged stones. To prevent escape, they had heavy forked poles fastened round their necks; their hands, if they were troublesome, might be secured through holes in a rough wooden board, and they were fettered with chains on their ankles. Linked together by ropes, the long lines known as coffles, they trudged miserably on towards their terrifying fate. Their captors drove them relentlessly forward, ignoring wounds and whipping them if necessary. If any succumbed, he was thrown on one side; if any of them became too ill, they were left to die or more mercifully knocked on the head.[55]

The slave's work on the plantation was really very hard. From the slave's point of view this was skilled work: he had to cultivate a crop unknown to him - for the most part sugar in the West Indies, cotton or tobacco in America. All was new and strange to him; he had, therefore, to be broken in; he had to be taught his new duties; he had to be 'seasoned' as the saying was. 'Seasoning' was the harsh discipline that every slave underwent.[56]

The slaves were sold at auctions, being bought in stark naked, men and women, alike, and mounted on a chair, where the bidders handled and prodded them and felt their muscles and examined their teeth and made them jump and flex their arms, to satisfy themselves that they were not diseased or disabled. As the slaves were bought single, it followed that often husband and wife, children and parents went to different owners; and the loss of family and all that the slaves held dear was added to the loss of liberty. So the slave left the auction room, bereaved of everything, to begin a new life of 'abject, hopeless and crushing servitude'.[57]

[55] Sherrard, *Freedom from Fear* (London, 1959), p. 61-62.
[56] Ibid., p. 69.
[57] Ibid., p. 67

Why was Slavery Abolished

Someone may point out: Was it not Christian Britain which finally abolished the slavery? Well, if someone practices tyranny isn't he the one who has to give up that practice?

The truth of the matter is that Britain was the biggest slave-trader and when it called for abolishing slave-trade, the reason were not humane or moral – it was economic.

The movement against slavery was not spear-headed by Churches; it was led by a handful of moralists whose cries remained unheeded till the economic necessity compelled the British Parliament to pass a bill in 1807 against slave-trade. After 26 years, another bill was passed to abolish slavery itself in British-held countries in 1833.

As Professor D W Brogan writes in the introduction of Dr. Eric Williams' magnificent book *Capitalism and Slavery,* "the abolition of the slave-trade and later the abolition of slavery, were not merely the results of a rising standard of political ethics in Britain but were a form of cutting of losses. The West Indies sugar monopoly became intolerable to a booming industrial society..." To summarise, in the words of Prof. Brogan, the slave system was "tolerated, defended, praised as long as it was profitable."

What had happened is that the French at one point were able to produce more sugar than the English in West Indies. Up until then, there was a convenient "triangular trade" between Africa, the Caribbean and England. Slaves were taken from West Africa to the Caribbean to work the on the plantations. Sugar, tobacco, coffee and cotton were produced in the Caribbean and taken to England for processing. Utensils, guns, handcuffs and fetters were taken from England to Africa. The British had a monopoly on all this.[58]

Between 1783 and 1789 the progress of the French sugar islands, of Saint Domingue especially, was the most amazing phenomenon in colonial development. The fertility of the French soil was decisive and French sugar cost one-fifth less than Britain.[59]

The British had to stop the French and the only way to do so was to stop the slave trade. Of course the British had colonized India as well. If they could end the Atlantic slave trade to the West Indies and the Caribbean, they could still produce sugar for themselves in India.

Gaston-Martin, the well-known French historian of the slave-trade and the Caribbean colonies, has rightly accused the then British Prime Minister Pitt of his propaganda to free the slaves 'in the name, no doubt of humanity, but also to ruin French commerce.'

[58] Dr. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 65.
[59] Ibid., p. 122

Hypocrisy of The Abolitionists

"Ironically enough," says Dr. Williams, "it was the former slave owners of the West Indies (i.e. the British) who now held the humanitarian torch. Those who, in 1807, were predicting that abolition of the British slave-trade would 'diminish commerce, diminish revenue and diminish navigation; and in the end... totally remove the great cornerstone of British prosperity,' were, after 1807, the very men who protested against 'a system of man-stealing against a poor and inoffensive people.'"[60]

A great mass movement for abolition of the slave-trade developed in Jamaica in 1849. Overnight parties and sects were united on the question of justice to Africa. They denounced the slave-trade and slavery as "opposed to humanity - productive of the worst evils to Africa - degrading to all engaged in the traffic."

And the worth of all such high-sounding phrases may be judged from the fact that the British capitalism, even after destroying West Indian slavery, "continued to thrive on Brazilian, Cuban and American slavery."[61] This was because the use of slave-produced sugar in the West Indies was bad for the British economy but no one proposed to stop the use of the slave-produced cotton from the United States. In fact, no one proposed seriously to stop the use of the slave-produced sugar from Brazil or Cuba. It was money - not a passion to be good - that was the deciding factor.

This hypocrisy is seen even today when a 'superpower' will condemn the nations it sees as its enemy for an act against democracy, the freedom of others and 'human rights' but it will turn a blind eye when its own ally does exact the same or even worse, support and aid it. The idea of unjust nations is always to use propaganda (i.e. the media) to mislead and confuse the masses.

The taking of slaves continued for at least another 25 years even after 1833.

Was the American Civil War to Emancipate the Slaves?

As the Europeans began opposing slavery in the guise of being humanitarian, the use of slaves continued to rage in America. Here lies another myth: Most North Americans believe that the 19th century American Civil War was fought to free the slaves and they give credit for this to Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States.

In those days, America was divided into 'the Union' and 'the Confederacy' and the Civil War was between the two parties. The Union (or "the North") was led by Abraham Lincoln and was made up of 20 free States to the North and 5 border slave states and the Confederacy (or "the South") was made up of 11 States to the South

[60] Ibid., p. 175-6.
[61] Ibid.

that still practised and upheld slavery.[62] The South still practised slavery because that was where all the plantations were. The Northern States (closer to the Canadian border) were too cold to have slave plantations around the year anyway. Many slaves dreamt of and attempted escaping from the South to the North.

Did Lincoln really champion the fight to free the slaves? Let us see.

The famous author Dale Carnegie wrote in his book *Lincoln, the Unknown*:[63]

'Ask the average American citizen today why the Civil War was fought, and the chances are that he will reply, 'To free the slaves'. Here is a sentence taken from Lincoln's first inaugural address: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it now exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so..."'

Carnegie also quotes Lincoln as saying, "My objective in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving the others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the coloured race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause; and I shall do more whenever I believe doing more will help the cause."[64]

Lincoln himself married into a slave-owning family. Part of the money that his wife received from the settlement of her father's estate had come from the sale of slaves. And the only really intimate friend that Lincoln ever had, Joshua Speed, was a member of a slave-owning family.

As the battle between the Union and Confederacy continued, there was a risk that both France and England were on the verge of recognising the Confederacy and not the Union. France was ruled by Napoleon III who believed that if the Confederates won they would favour his new empire. In fact the South offered to give Napoleon III twelve million dollars worth of cotton if he would recognize the Confederacy and they promised to give him so many orders for import goods that it would start smoke rolling out of every factory chimney in France, night and day.

Napoleon III therefore urged Russia and England to join him in recognizing the Confederacy. The British listened eagerly to Napoleon's plans. The United States was getting too rich and powerful to please them. They wanted to see the nation divided, the Union broken. Besides, they needed the South's cotton. Many of England's factories had closed, and a million people were not only idle but poor and reduced to actual paupers. Children were crying for food, hundreds of people were dying of

[62] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_(American_Civil_War)
[63] Dale Carnegie, *Lincoln the Unknown* (1948), chapter 22.
[64] Ibid.

starvation. There was one way that England could get cotton and come out of poverty and that was to join Napoleon III in recognising the Confederacy. And besides, as far as the Europeans were concerned, the fighting between the North and the South in America was a meaningless battle. They had no particular reason to support one over the other, other than the economic advantages of supporting the South.

Now if that were done, what would happen in America? The South would get guns, food, railway equipment, and a tremendous lift in confidence and morale. And what would the North get? Two new and powerful enemies. The situation, bad enough now, would be hopeless then.

Abraham Lincoln knew this and he confessed in 1862, 'we must either change our tactics now or lose the game.' Lincoln realized that for him to win, Europe's attitude towards the war must be changed, and he knew how to do it. A million people in Europe had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* - had read it and wept and learned to hate the heartaches and injustice of slavery. So Abraham Lincoln knew that if he issued his "Proclamation of Emancipation", Europeans would see the war in a different light. It would no longer be a bloody quarrel over the preservation of a Union that meant nothing to them. Instead, it would be respected as a holy crusade to destroy slavery. European Governments would then not dare recognise the South. Public opinion wouldn't tolerate aiding people who engaged in human slavery.

Finally, therefore, in July 1862 Lincoln decided to issue his Proclamation of Emancipation (i.e. the proclamation to free the slaves). His advisers however told him the timing was not good because their army had recently suffered humiliating defeats to the South. So Lincoln waited. Two months later, they gained some victory and so finally, the Proclamation of Emancipation was published in September 1862, which was to be effective on 1st January 1863.

As Carnegie put it, Lincoln may have been a humanitarian and perhaps he, from the depth of heart, was against slavery. 'But it does not mean that we should glorify him by false propaganda. The reality was that he did not fight the Civil War to emancipate the slaves; rather he emancipated the slaves to win the Civil War and save the Union.'[65]

Territorial Slavery

So far we have discussed one type of slavery i.e., household slavery. There was a second type of slavery called Territorial Slavery or subjugation of one nation by another.

Though household slavery is now supposedly abolished, territorial slavery is still very much alive. In the past we had nations that were 'British Colonies' or 'French

[65] Ibid.

Colonies' and later these nations were give their flag independence. The Europeans used to take raw material from Africa and India and other places they colonized back to their own countries for processing and production. So when they gave these colonies their independence, the nations were left with no infrastructure. The result is that to this day, poor African nations will sell their raw material as cheap exports to the richer nations and then import back products made from their own raw material at higher prices. Often the goods sold to African nations are expired or 'old stock'.

Another form of Territorial Slavery can be seen in the Americas and places like Australia. The Native Indians who were the original inhabitants of "the New World" (including places like Canada) were hunted like buffaloes and gradually pushed out from their own lands and have now been forced to live in colder or less fertile lands called "Reserves". The Aborigines of Australia were subjected to the same treatment.

Dr. Eric Williams quotes a story of the Native Indian Chief Hatuey who, doomed to die for resisting the invaders, staunchly refused to accept the Christian faith as the gateway to salvation when he learned that his executioners, too, hope to get to Heaven.[66]

Even more tragic was the fate of the Africans in Southern Africa. The Portuguese, armed with the Pope's decree to "reduce the infidels to servitude" until the recent past continued to keeping Angola and Mozambique under the yoke of Territorial Slavery. Pope Paul VI would often issue statements on political problems of the world but never advised Portugal about its "subjects" in Africa. The Popes maintained special relations with Portugal and Spain, the two Roman Catholic nations that stubbornly refused to free their African colonies. In July 1970, Pope Paul VI received some leaders of freedom fighters of Portuguese African colonies. This meeting enraged Portugal, which issued a protest and the Vatican nervously issued an explanation. On July 11 1970, the *Standard* newspaper (in Kenya) published a news article, "Pope's note comforts Portugal" explaining that that the Vatican had said that the Pope had received them (i.e., the leaders of liberation movements of Africa under Portuguese rule) as Catholics and Christians, without reference to their political functions. He reminded them to the Church's teaching that peaceful means should always be used even in seeking what one considers to be one's right.

Subsequently, a black Roman Catholic wrote a sarcastic letter that was published in the same newspaper to say, "The earlier news that the Holy Father had received the said leaders had perturbed me much. Now this clarification has put my anxiety to rest.... It was the Roman Catholic Church which established Western colonialism by dividing all the newly discovered lands and countries into two halves: giving the Spaniards the Western half (like Americas), and granting Portugal the Eastern half (like Africa and India). ...according to our beliefs of the Papal infallibility, Pope Paul VI is bound to carry on and justify whatever was decreed by his Holy predecessors.

[66] Dr. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 8.

Therefore, according to my thinking he should not have encouraged those leaders. Now his clarification has comforted me a lot spiritually. Now I may sleep in peace with a sure knowledge that my Church has not condemned itself by implying that previous Popes were wrong in establishing and supporting the 'enlightenment' of this black continent under Portuguese Imperialism."[67]

What is interesting is that the Pope advised those seeking freedom from their colonial masters to always seek "peaceful means" even for what was their right but there was no advice to the Portuguese colonialists. This was similar to the Catholic priests during the Atlantic slave-trade who would, at the time of sailings of the slave-ships, pray to the Almighty to ensure the safety of the ships and always admonish the black slaves to behave gently and obediently but never thought it necessary to advise the masters of the slaves to think of them as human beings.

And the same can be seen today where a wealthy or powerful nation will invade other countries when it feels its right is at stake; but when unarmed civilians want to free themselves from their oppressive rulers (who are puppets of the rich nation), the rich nation will 'urge' them to resort to 'dialogue' and 'ensure there is a peaceful transition.' There is therefore always hypocrisy with the nations that have power and weapons. They will speak of democracy and humanitarian rights when it serves them well but they will ignore it and turn a blind eye when it is in their political or economic interests.

The Middle East is another example of Territorial Slavery: the plight of the Palestinians enslaved by the Israelis (who are backed by the USA). Most Middle East nations are ruled by monarchies and there is no freedom of speech or election. Iran is always condemned because it is not submissive to the Western powers but the brutal treatment of civilians and the lack of women's rights in the other nations like Saudi Arabia are never mentioned because they are 'friends' and 'allies' to the hypocritical Western nations.

South Africa's Apartheid system or racial segregation that lasted from 1948 to 1993 is another example. There were clear signs and boundaries where only 'the white man' was allowed and 'blacks and dogs' were not permitted. The whole world condemned South Africa but the United States and the United Kingdom refused to impose any sanctions on South Africa. The Church did not condemn it either until much later when other African nations gained independence and it was politically the right thing to do. Rhodesia had the same fate as South Africa until its independence in 1980 when it became Zimbabwe. The common joke amongst the Africans is that of an African telling a European, "When you came, you had the Bible and we had the land. Now we have the Bible and you have the land."

Territorial slavery can therefore be direct (when a land is colonized or invaded) or it can be indirect, such as when a nation supports tyrannical rulers by supplying them with arms and using the media to favour them, even though the people of that land

[67] Akhtar Rizvi, *Islāmic and Christian Perspectives on Slavery*.

do not support or want these tyrannical rulers. Territorial slavery continues to thrive to this day by means of bribes and threats to control weaker nations.

After the Second World War, the United Nations was formed so that every nation in the world could be a member and have a platform to voice its concerns and demand justice. But some nations were given special "veto" powers. These five nations are America, Britain, China, Russia and France. This gives them special powers to 'block' any resolution or decision made by the rest of the world. In other words, the United Nations has become a 'legal' way to control the rest of the world by a few rich nations. If, for example, any nation speaks of the oppression of Israel at the United Nations, the United States will immediately 'veto' any proposal to condemn Israel.

Islām holds the last hope for humanity to free itself from all injustices and oppression of others. This hope is the return of Imām al-Mahdi ('atfs) who will fill the earth with justice and equity as it is filled with injustice and tyranny. Amen.

﴿وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا﴾

And say, 'The truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Indeed falsehood is bound to vanish.'

- Surah Isrā, 17:81

Grade 12

Stream 1

Lesson Sequence: 29-32

Advanced Lessons in Fiqh

We estimate this unit can be taught over 4 lessons.

Lesson 29-30
Islamic Bioethics

Life is a gift from Allāh. No has a right to take it away except Allāh. It is harām for a person to even attempt taking his or her own life. When Islām legislates capital punishment for certain crimes or jihād as an armed struggle, it is only in extreme cases, after many conditions have been fulfilled, and because Allāh commands that, in order to prevent harm to the rest of the human society and/or to preserve Islām, the religion of Allāh.

Similarly, Islām values human relations and the family structure in Islām. Any practice that affects a child's right to inheritance (such as having children out of wedlock) or destroys the Islāmic view of a family (such as gay marriages) is condemned by Islām.

This lesson looks at some common practices in the field of medicine that have ethical implications and what Islām has to say about them. This is called Islāmic bioethics. Bioethics itself is a philosophical study of the ethical controversies brought about by advances in biology and medicine. This includes issues like organ transplantation, end-of-life care, use of respirators and life-support machines, abortion, cloning, artificial insemination and so on.

Life Bioethics

Reproduction: When it comes to matters related to reproduction and the birth of human beings, Islām allows the use of science and medicine to help in the process when it is not naturally possible for a lawfully wedded husband and wife to conceive. 'Lawfully wedded' means a marriage based on an established religion - not a civil marriage that is recognized by the government only. So an Islāmic marriage between a man and a woman is a lawful marriage. A Christian man and woman who are married according to the laws of their religion are also lawfully married. But a gay marriage, a common-law relationship, or even a civil marriage is not considered to be a lawful marriage in Islām. A man and woman married in court only are still non-mahram to each other.

Examples of lawful practices that a lawfully wedded husband and wife can engage in, in order to have children, include taking fertility drugs, artificial insemination, In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), and so on.

All these are permissible in Islām, provided the procedure does not involve using or taking anything from a man/woman other than the lawfully wedded man and woman. Examples of unlawful practices are artificial insemination when a woman 'buys' sperm from a sperm bank or takes it as a donation from a man not married to her. Similarly, using the egg of a woman who is not the wife of a man is not

permissible. Also, it is not permissible to use another woman to carry the child of a couple in her womb.

Organ Donation: Islām allows a person to receive the organ of another person who is dead e.g. lungs, heart, eyes, etc. However the dead body of a Muslim cannot be cut open unless it is absolutely necessary e.g. to save the life of another Muslim or for a criminal investigation. So the organs of a dead Muslim cannot be donated to a non-Muslim. This is not about discrimination because Islām *does* allow a Muslim to donate certain things to non-Muslims whilst still alive, provided it does not harm him or her e.g. donating blood or bone marrow.

As science progresses and makes new discoveries in cloning, organ farming, and so on, these basic principles will continue to be guidelines on what is and is not permissible.

Adoption

Islām speaks very highly of adoption especially if it involves the care of orphans. The Qur'ān has numerous āyāt on orphans and there are very many ahādith as well. The Messenger of Allāh (s) had himself adopted a son called Zayd, who is also mentioned in the Qur'ān.

The Messenger of Allāh (s) said: 'I and the guardian of an orphan shall be like 'this' in Paradise… (and he joined his index and middle fingers when saying 'this')[33]

In his will, just before passing away, Imām Ali ('a) said: 'Allāh, Allāh (i.e. I remind you of Allāh) concerning the orphans. That they should never be hungry or lost while you are present. For I heard the Messenger of Allāh (s) saying: 'One who supports an orphan until his needs are met, Allāh, the Mighty & Glorious, makes Paradise wājib on him because of that; just like He makes the Fire wājib on one who consumes the property of orphans.'[34]

And Imām Ali ('a) has also said: 'If any believing man or woman places their hand on the head of an orphan, out of mercy for them, Allāh would write for them a good deed for every hair that their hand passes through.'[35]

So it is clear that Islām encourages adoption. However, there are certain rules that must still be observed with adoption:

1. Because an adopted child is not a biological child, he/she does not become mahram to the parents adopting them unless the child was nursed by the mother at birth. This means if the adopted child is a girl, she will become a non-mahram to the father (and any bāligh boys in the family) after she

[33] Mizan al-Hikmah, Hadith # 22881
[34] Mizan al-Hikmah, Hadith # 22877
[35] Mizan al-Hikmah, Hadith # 22880

attains bulúgh. And if the adopted child is a boy, he will become a non-mahram to the mother (and any bāligha girls in the family) after he attains bulúgh.

2. An adopted child cannot take the name of the adopted family. He/she must maintain his/her biological parents name unless they are not known, etc. Even then, it is important that the adopted child does not claim to be the real son/daughter of the adopting parents. This is to ensure there is no mix-up in matters like marriage, inheritance, and so forth.
3. An adopted child is not automatically entitled to inheritance of the adopting parents according to the Islāmic laws (as are other biological children). Adopted children can get a share if the parents give them that share during their lifetime or if they specify a share for them in their Will. But Islām allows a person to only decide about one-third of his estate in his Will. The remaining two-thirds are divided according to Islāmic *shari'ah* and given to spouses and blood relatives. In later lessons we learn more about these laws.

End of Life Bioethics

When it comes to matters of death and dying, as mentioned earlier, only Allāh has the right to take a life and in exceptional cases, Allāh allows others to do so, such as for capital punishment (when decreed by a just and lawfully appointed Islāmic court of law) or in the case of Jihād if all other options have been exhausted and the only way to save Islām or defend one's honour, property or life is by fighting and killing the enemy.

Suicide: Suicide is absolutely forbidden in Islām and a person who takes his own life is doomed to be punished in the Hereafter by Allāh. In a hadith of Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq (a), he was asked if a true believer can die of leprosy. He said, a believer can even die of drowning or being burnt, etc. A believer can die any death, except one: he or she never commits suicide. If a person is clinically diagnosed with depression, it is wājib for them to take the necessary medication and seek therapy or any help to prevent suicidal thoughts.

Birth Control: If a husband and wife wish to stop the birth of a child, they are allowed to take measures to stop conception from taking place (such as, by the use of contraceptives). But abortion is not allowed and absolutely *harām* unless the life of the mother is in danger if she continues with the pregnancy. In exceptional cases like when it is known in advance that the child to be born is severely deformed and handicapped, a mujtahid would have to be consulted on what to do.

Euthanasia: Sometimes a person is very ill or in a coma and is not expected to survive and some people choose to end the person's life in order to relieve his or her suffering and pain. This is called euthanasia or 'mercy-killing'. It is *harām* in Islām. However it is not wājib to put a person on a respirator or other machine that helps keep them alive, if they are already in a coma.

If a patient is in a coma but able to breathe on their own and not expected to ever wake up again, you can choose not to use any life-support machine and leave the matter in Allāh's hands. This is usually the best choice. Or you can choose to use the machine. But once you do that, you cannot remove it if you know that removing it will definitely kill him/her. You can only remove it again if the doctors say the patient is strong enough to breathe on their own and there is a chance they will not die immediately if the machine is disconnected.

Also, if a patient in a coma is having a hard time breathing and the doctors wish to administer strong drugs to calm the patient, it is allowed in Islām even if doing so may further reduce their chance of survival. Because the intention is not to end their life. It is to give them relief from pain.

Of course if a person is conscious or if medical experts believe there is a strong likelihood of their survival and waking up again, then it is wājib to do everything possible to save their life even if they will be handicapped or paralysed thereafter.

Remember always: Life is precious and a gift from Allāh. Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا﴾

…Whoever takes a life without any reason… it is as though he has killed all of mankind; and whoever saves a life, it is as though he has saved all of mankind….

- Surah al-Māidah, 5:32

Lesson 31-32
Inheritance Laws in Islam

Importance of Leaving a Will (*Wasiya*) in Islām

It is recommended that a person should make a last will before his or her death, especially when they feel that death is near. He or she should return to people what they owe them, and all debts should be settled, or the executors of their will should be instructed to do so through the will. If he or she has not paid khums, it should be paid, and also instructions should be given for Hajj, if that duty was unfulfilled, and also missed prayers (salāh) and wājib fasts.

A person who thinks that death is near should also inform his successors about his or her assets, especially any concealed assets that they may not discover. Those Muslims appointed as executors to a Muslim's will (wasiya) are bound to act according to the instructions in the will unless the instructions are for a sinful act or denying the Islāmic right of an heir, and so on.

A person can also cancel his will at any time before death and make a new one. In this case, it is the final version that is binding.

One who makes a will should be intelligent enough to discriminate between right and wrong and make it of his or her own free choice. The will of a child who is ten years of age or older is legal as far as the relatives are concerned. The executor(s) to whom the will (*wasiya*) is addressed must be sane (*'āqil*), adult (*bāligh*) Muslims who are trustworthy. If a person agrees to be someone's executor then it is wājib for them to fulfil that duty. They can only reject this responsibility while the testator is alive and not after his or her demise.

It is wājib for the heirs of the deceased to use any wealth the deceased leaves behind to first pay for the Hajj if it was due on the deceased, and for any missed fasts and prayers, and to pay any khums and zakāh which was due, even if the deceased did not make a will or specify this in his or her will.

Is It Necessary to Write a Will?

Even though in *shari'ah* it is mustahab to leave a will behind, it becomes wājib given the circumstances we live in today (i.e. in non-Muslim countries). In Canada for example, If a person dies without a will, the government appoints an executor who will divide the estate among the heirs as he sees fit. The executor/lawyer will also take his pay for the work he does from the estate of the deceased. A lot of one's estate is lost to lawyers' fees and bureaucracy and often there is a lot of delay before even the heirs get anything. Furthermore, the division by the executor will not be according to the Islāmic law.

Therefore a Muslim living in a non-Muslim country should consider it as wājib to leave a will behind so that he is not guilty of not giving his heirs their rightful Islāmic share. Even if a spouse or child contests a person's Islāmic Will after his or her demise and the court decides in their favour, the deceased will have at least done his or her Islāmic duty before Allāh.

If a person does not have the means or funds to hire a lawyer and to get a formal will made for himself, they should write their entire will in their own handwriting and sign it. Such a will is called a 'holographic will' and in many courts of law it is accepted even if there are no witness signatures to the will. In order to write a will, a person does not have to know all the divisions and rights of heirs according to Islāmic law. They can simply write in their will that they would like their estate to be divided as per the laws of the Usuli Imāmiya Shi'ah Ithna 'Ashari Muslim faith and they may also specify the name of a Shi'ah scholar or individuals from the Shi'ah Muslim community that they would like to be the executors of their will. It is much better of course, if a person also asks these executors beforehand and if possible, make them witnesses who sign the will as well.

It is also a good idea to mention in one's will that in case both you and your spouse were to pass away suddenly (e.g. in a tragedy) who you would like to designate as the guardian of your children. This is especially important if your extended family – siblings, uncles, aunts, parents, etc. – do not live in the same country as you. Typically if a person does not specify a guardian and there are no relatives to take care of the child, the government will put the child under the care of the Ministry of Child Services who in turn will put the children in a foster home. Very often this is a non-Muslim foster home where the children stay until they get adopted by others.

The One-Third Share

Instead of permitting a Muslim to distribute all his or her estate as they please or the other extreme - not giving them any say - Islām allows a Muslim to dictate how up to one-third of their estate is to be distributed after them, provide they make this request a part of their will. If a person does not mention how they wish to spend up to a maximum of one-third of their estate, then the entire amount is distributed as per the Islāmic law. In fact, according to some scholars, when the Qur'ān asks a person to make a *wasiyyah* before death (e.g. 2:177) it is referring to the one-third only. And when the Qur'ān talks of sinning by depriving an heir his or her right (e.g. in 2:182) it is referring to the two-thirds.

If the specified expenditure by the deceased is more than one-third of the estate, the will is valid only if his legitimate heirs explicitly agree; otherwise it will be binding only to the amount of one-third. If the specified expenditure by the deceased is more than one-third of the estate, and the legitimate heirs give their consent during the lifetime of the deceased, they cannot revoke this agreement after the death of the deceased, and it will be binding.

Basics of Inheritance in Islām

In Islāmic law, people who have a blood or matrimonial relation with the deceased can inherit. The relatives who can inherit are classified into three categories. In the presence of relatives of the first category, even if there is only one, the relatives of the second category do not inherit anything. And in the presence of relatives of the second category, even if there is only one, relatives of the third category do not inherit anything. A person belonging to the lower category will receive an inheritance only if there is no person in the higher category. That said, a husband and wife always inherit from each other in all cases.

The Three Categories

The first category consists of the deceased's parents and children. If there are no children, his or her grandchildren inherit in their place, but they do not inherit if even one son or daughter of the deceased is alive.

The second category consists of the deceased's brothers and sisters and paternal and maternal grandfathers and grandmothers. If no brother or sister is alive, their children inherit in their place, but they do not inherit if even one brother or sister of the deceased is alive. Relatives of this category inherit only if there is no relative belonging to the first category.

The third category consists of the paternal and maternal uncles and aunts. If none of them is alive, their children inherit in their place; but they do not inherit if even one uncle or aunt is alive. If there are no uncles and aunts or cousins of the deceased, then the deceased's parents' paternal and maternal uncles and aunts (or their children or grandchildren) inherit. In such rare cases, if the deceased only has, for example, a paternal step-uncle and the son of a real paternal uncle, then the son of the real paternal uncle will inherit from him to the exclusion of the paternal step-uncle.

A husband and wife are outside these three categories. They inherit from each other regardless of the presence of any relative of the three categories.

The shares of the inheritance allotted to the members of the appropriate categories are worked out following a fairly complex calculation, and it is advisable to consult a qualified legal (*fiqh*) expert to determine the proportions of the inheritance. Some basic calculations are discussed in the next lesson.

Those who are banned from Inheriting in Islām

In some cases, those who normally inherit from a deceased relative are not allowed to receive their share. These include:

1. A murderer does not inherit from his victim, even if he or she is the nearest relative of the deceased. But one who has killed someone unintentionally can receive inheritance.
2. One who has renounced Islām cannot inherit from a Muslim relative, but a Muslim can inherit from a non-Muslim relative.
3. If the deceased is heavily in debt, these debts must first be settled from his assets, and if nothing remains, his relatives will not receive anything.

Hiring Someone to Pray and Fast

During one's lifetime it is not permitted to hire anyone to perform salāh on your behalf, even if you are unable to perform them. However, after death, it is possible for the eldest son to hire someone to perform the compensatory (qadā) prayers for a parent's omitted wājib prayers. It is therefore permissible to pray and to fast in compensation for the missed prayers and fasting of a deceased person and to receive payment for this.

The person who is hired must be an Ithna 'Ashari Shi'ah who is bāligh and 'āqil. He or she must know the necessary rules (*ahkām*) of salāh (or fasting as applicable). A person who is hired for this purpose may pray for a person of the same or of the opposite sex, and must pray according to what is prescribed for themselves, e.g. a woman must perform all the prayers in a lowered voice, and man must perform the morning, evening, and night prayers in a loud voice, even if performing the qadā prayer for someone of the opposite sex.

The person who is performing qadā salāh for a deceased person must make the intention of performing them for the missed prayers of that person, and must also specify which salāh he or she is compensating for. When the compensatory (qadā) salāh has been performed, the deceased person will be considered free of his or her obligation.

What is Estate?

An 'estate' is the collective name for everything you own at the time of your death.

Before distributing a person's estate amongst the rightful heirs, the executor(s) of the will must pay off all the deceased's debts, legal as well as religious. Legal debt would be, for example, money the deceased had borrowed from others or payments they had to make but never settled. Religious debts are outstanding dues such as unpaid zakāh, khums, kaffāra, and so on. It also includes the cost for wājib hajj, and missed prayers and fasts (if someone needs to be hired to compensate for them). Additionally, the cost for the **wājib** portion of the funeral expenses can also be deducted from a person's estate before it is distributed (e.g. cost of grave, coffin and shroud).

So an executor must:

1. Calculate the total estate.
2. Subtract any legal or religious debts.
3. Subtract any costs for the funeral that are **wājib**.
4. Following the deceased's instructions for up to one-third of his estate (if the deceased specified this in his or her will).
5. Finally distribute the **remaining estate** to the heirs as per Islāmic laws.

Sometimes a person may have joint bank accounts (e.g. with a spouse) in which both partners have agreed to share everything equally. In such a case, only half of the total amount in all such joint bank accounts and investments belong to the deceased. The other half is not a part of the estate unless a different understanding existed between the partners that is specified in the will or another document of proof.

The House: For most people, most of their assets (financial worth or value) lies in the value of their Home. According to Canadian law, when a person dies, the home belongs to the spouse. According to Islāmic law, 50% of the house's value belongs to the deceased and therefore must be counted as a part of his or her estate.

To circumvent this matter, so that the surviving spouse is not left homeless, each spouse can give their share to the other, in their lifetime, as a 'conditional gift' (*hiba mashruta*). The gift is conditional because it is given 'on the condition that it must be returned if the marriage ends in a divorce or the spouse dies.'

This means if there is a divorce, each one takes his and her share back and the house's value is divided equally. And if one spouse dies, the surviving spouse gets back their original share that they had given away (since it was *hiba mashruta*) plus they have the share of the spouse who died since it was given to them in their life time. In this manner, both a husband and wife are assured of not being homeless if the other dies and the house is then not added to the estate for distribution to the other heirs.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Pilot Curriculum 2020-2021
Grade 12- Advanced Studies- Stream 2
Qur'an and Hadith Studies

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Preface and Introduction by Moulana Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi)
Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Islamic Center

بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيم

نٓ ۚ وَٱلْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ

Nūn! [I swear] by the pen and what they inscribe! (68:1)

Salāmun ʿalaykum,

All praise is for Allah, Lord and Nurturer of the worlds. It is an honor and pleasure to address you dear teachers, administrators, educators, and parents. This āyah of the Qurʾān demonstrates the sanctity of writing. When Allah takes an oath by those who write and that which has been written, it clearly indicates that writing and books are instrumental in shaping the future generations. If we do not fulfill our responsibilities, we will be held accountable. However, if we do a proper job, Allah guarantees us a high position.

We know that Islam places great emphasis on education as a whole. After delving further, we find that education has two formats: formal and informal. Informal education entails formats such as speeches, classes, discussions, or a teacher's interactions within the classroom. Formal education refers to the standards and guidelines that teachers follow when teaching, which is usually a curriculum.

We are honored to be a part of this noble cause of developing and compiling a K-12 curriculum for Islamic Studies and Qurʾān, as well as for life skills and contemporary issues related to our daily lives. As we know, Islam is a complete way of life. Allah says in the Noble Qurʾān:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِى وَنُسُكِى وَمَحْيَاىَ وَمَمَاتِى لِلَّـهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَـٰلَمِينَ

Say, "Surely my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah, Lord of the worlds." (6:162)

From this āyah, we deduce that Islam encompasses all areas of our lives. However, based on our limitations and circumstances this is difficult to implement in all areas of education. Full-time schools generally only allocate a few hours a week for Islamic studies. Similarly, weekend schools also only operate for a few hours once a week, over 30-34 weeks of the year.

Overall, Sunday schools and full-time Islamic schools do not yet have the capacity to adopt a system of complete integration for our children to learn Islam in conjunction with other subjects. Therefore, most schools focus on these five subjects: Qurʾān, ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, and akhlāq.

Alḥamdulillāh, Kisa Kids is pleased to present the pilot version of our Islamic Studies curriculum. The current pilot focuses on the four core subjects: ʿaqāʾid, fiqh, history, and akhlāq. Inshāʾ Allāh, we hope to further develop the fifth core subject, Qurʾān, in areas such as recitation, tajwīd, mafāhīm (understanding), and tafsīr and deeper understanding.

In Islamic Studies, we've had some great milestones, alḥamdulillāh. The Pre-K-6th curriculum has undergone many iterations and reached a good point. Although we had a pilot for 7th grade, based on input from different individuals, we have transferred some of the topics from 7th grade into 8th grade and added additional lessons.

The 9th-12th grade curriculum is also a compilation of different resources. Although we had created a scope and sequence and planned to develop the lessons ourselves, we ran into some unforeseen hurdles with the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this pandemic, we expedited the launch of RISE Online, a full-time online Islamic school, and Salam Online, an online weekend Islamic school platform that caters to over 250 teachers, principals, and educators across the globe, in collaboration with more than 20 schools during this pandemic era.

We have found that there is an urgent need for online resources during this time; therefore, our team of scholars, educators, and volunteers, including the Kisa Kids curriculum team and Islamic Syllabus team from Australia have created a pilot using different curricula given to us for use. Therefore, we have taken lessons from different sources: Islamic Syllabus, Kisa Kids curriculum, Madressa.net, Sirat, QFatima, and Shaykh Salim Yusufali's work, and compiled them into one pilot, by the will of Allah.

Alḥamdulillāh, with the barakah of this collaboration, we have launched this as Phase 1 of the 7-12 curriculum plan. This will be the pilot for this year, and inshāʾ Allāh, over the course of this year, we will conduct surveys and focus groups to gauge what is working and what is not working.

Based on input from educators, parents, students, and teachers we will strive to improve the curriculum for next year, inshāʾ Allāh. We humbly request all the users, principals, scholars, and students to consider the following points:

- The K-12 curriculum will have lots of errors and mistakes, as well as some ambiguities. We humbly request that you give us your input so we may make improvements, and forgive us for any shortcomings.
- Although the books entail the four core subjects, they may not have the best flow, as the material has been compiled from different curricula, so there may be some repetition in some areas and lack of information in others. Again, we humbly request your input.
- This curriculum is a pilot, not the final edition. We will accommodate suggestions to launch a final one at a later time.
- If anyone has any lesson plans, teaching methodologies, supplemental curriculum, or any additional resources, please share them with us so we can consider incorporating them into the curriculum.

- If someone is working on digital resources, such as presentations, quizzes, games, etc., please share with us via this form so we can disseminate these widely, and others may benefit as well.
- As we are moving toward digitalization, which will require a strong learning management system, we are open to feedback. We value your collaboration so we can avoid duplication, optimize our potential, and see great results, inshāʾAllāh. At the end of the day, our goal is to nurture and plant the seed of love of Qurʾān, Islam, and teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) in the hearts and minds of our children in order to shape their future and attain the best in this world and the Hereafter.

For all questions, concerns, suggestions, and feedback, please contact admin@kisakids.org or admin@salamonline.education.

With Duʿās,

Nabi Raza Mir (Abidi)

Grade 12

Stream 2

Lesson Sequence: 1-24

Advanced Lessons in Sciences of the Qur'an

We estimate this unit can be taught over 24 lessons.

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 1-2: Introduction

- **Introduction: Definition, History and Main Topics**

The Holy Quran is the verbatim Words of God, the most authentic source in Islam and the one and only Book in the history of man that is divinely preserved against any distortion or perversion. It is the living miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (P) and the only literature that no man or jinn is ever able to produce something like unto it.

Definition

By 'science' here we don't mean natural sciences such as physics and chemistry. The 'science' here is an expression for methodological study and certain techniques for the understanding of the Quran. The Sciences of the Quran therefore are preliminary studies that are necessary to enable the correct understanding of the Quran. The sciences of the abrogating and abrogated Ayaat, the clear and the unclear Ayaat and the occasions of the revelation, etc. are some examples of the sciences of the Quran.

For instance, the Almighty Allah in Surah 4 Ayah 3 states: ***"Marry women that are pure for you, two or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one."*** And in the same Surah, Ayah 129 states: ***"You will never be able to do justice between wives even if it is your ardent desire."*** Are these two Ayaat contrary to each other? Or does the latter Ayah abrogate the former one? The correct understanding of these Ayaat requires acquaintance with the sciences of the Quran.

History

Although the Holy Quran is revealed in plain Arabic language (26:195), due to certain internal and external factors that will be discussed in this course, its best understanding requires certain prerequisite studies. At the time of the revelation of the Quran when Muslims faced any difficulty understanding the Quran they would simply ask the Holy Prophet (P) to whom the Quran was revealed. With the demise of the Prophet (P) the need for classification of the techniques of understanding the Quran became more imperative.
According to Al-Soyouti, amongst the first Four Caliphs, Imam Ali (a.s) has narrated the most narrations about the techniques of understanding the Quran.[1] However, the expression of the 'sciences of the Quran' was not used until the 5th century. Al-Zaraqani in his book Manahelul-'Irfan states: "*It is known among the writers of the sciences of the Quran that the advent of this expression was the seventh century. However, I found a book in the Egyptian Public Library, named 'Al-Borhan in the sciences of the Quran'. The book is compiled by Ali Ibn*

Ibrahim Ibn Sa'eed known as 'al-Houfi' died in 430 (A.H) in thirty volumes, which today only fifteen volumes of it are available."[2]

Types of literature in the sciences of the Quran

Muslim scholars have usually discussed the sciences of the Quran in one of three following styles:

1. Introduction to their exegesis of the Quran

As mentioned earlier, the sciences of the Quran are general techniques of understanding the Quran. Thus, many exegetists of the Quran have briefly discussed the main topics of the sciences of the Quran in the beginning of their exegesis such as al-Faydh al-Kashani, died in 1091 (A.H) in the beginning of his Tafsir 'al-Safi', Seyyed Hashem al-Bahrani, died in 1109 (A.H) in the beginning of his Tafsir 'al-Borhan', etc.

2. Separate books on the sciences of the Quran

Due to the significance of the sciences of the Quran many scholars have compiled separate books on the topic for more detailed discussions. The following are some of the most important references compiled on the sciences of the Quran.

a) *al-Borhan Fi 'Uloomel-Quran* compiled by BadrudDin al-Zarkashi, died in 794 (A.H). al-Zarkashi was an Egyptian scholar following the Shaafei' school. His book is published in Arabic in four volumes and covers 47 sciences of the Quran.
b) *al-Etqaan Fi 'Uloomel-Quran* compiled by JalaludDin al-Soyouti died in 911 (A.H). He was also from Egypt and followed the school of Shaafei'. His book is published in Arabic, two volumes and covers 80 sciences of the Quran.
c) *Al-Tamheed Fi 'Uloomel-Quran* compiled by Ayatollah Muhammad Hadi Ma'refat one of the contemporary Shi'a scholars. His book is published in Arabic in three volumes.

3. A particular science of the Quran

The third category of the compilation on the sciences of the Quran is books that are dealing only with one particular branch of the sciences of the Quran. Obviously these works are more detailed and are only studied in the advanced level of Islamic education. An example of such works is 'E'jazul-Quran' (The miracles of the Quran) by al-Baaqellani, died in 403 (A.H). This book is published in two volumes and only deals with the linguistic miracles of the Quran.

The present course will be a concise version of the second category of the sciences of the Quran.

The present course though briefly fits into the second category of the study of the sciences of the Quran.

The main topics that will be discussed in this course include: a controversial discussion on the method of the revelation of the Quran, the history of the Quran, the myth of the distortion of the Quran, the science of the context of the Quran, clear and unclear Ayaat and many other useful issues about the Quran.

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[1] Al-Etqaan Fi 'Uloomel-Quran, vol.2, p.87
[2] Manahelul-Irfan Fi Uloomel-Quran, vol.1 p.35

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 3-4: Revelation, its stages, the author of the Quran

Abstract

The Name and the Meaning of the Quran

'The Quran' (al-Quran) is the most common and famous one. Allah has given to the Book. From the first years of the revelation the revelation to Prophet Muhammad (P) was called 'the Quran' by the revelation itself.[1] The term is repeated 68 times in the Quran and except on two occasions (17:78) it means the Holy Quran or part of it. In English it is written 'the Koran' or more accurately 'the Quran'.

About the meaning of the term 'Quran' there are two famous opinions: 1) it is driven from al-Qar' meaning 'to collect'.[2] 2) It is driven from 'Qara' (to recite)[3]. Thus, it is called 'the Quran' for it is a Book **to be recited** (73:4) or because the revelation began by 'Read' (96:1). The second opinion seems more accurate.

Revelation

The Holy Quran is a divine revelation to Prophet Muhammad (P). The term used in the Quran for revelation is 'al-Wahy'. Al-Wahy literally means a quick and mysterious way of communication. The term 'revelation' literally means to pull the cover away from something, thus it is not the best translation for 'al-Wahy'.

Revelation in the Quran

The term 'revelation' is used in the Quran in its literal sense, i.e. 'a quick signal' (19:11) and is also used in its broad sense to mean communication of God to His creations. Thus, God reveals to the celestial bodies (41:12), to the bees (16:68), to His angels (8:12), to selected humans but not Prophets such as the mother of Moses (28:7), or to the disciples of Jesus (5:111) and finally in most instances the term is used to express God's communication to the Prophets (4:163).

In general, the revelation in the language of the Quran is "God's communication be it verbal or by action to His creation whether to nature, the plants, the animals, angels or humans." The revelation of God to nature forms 'the natural laws' as His revelation to the Prophets reveals 'the Canon laws'. Thus, the laws of the Quran are lawful phenomena similar to the natural laws.

'Revelation' in Islamic terminology is exclusively used for the communication of God with the Prophets.

Types of God's Revelation to Man

The best description of God's revelation to man is explained in Surah 42:51-52.

1. **Revelation without any intermediate**: This is the first type of revelation which is by 'casting to the heart' of the chosen person. The lowest degree of this revelation is called 'inspiration' (Elham) which was given to the mother of Moses (28:7), to the disciples of Jesus (5:111) and above all was cast directly to the heart of the Prophet Muhammad (P) in the Night of Ascension (53:10).
2. **Revelation by mediation of a physical obstacle:** In this type of revelation, the Almighty God creates the voice and enrich it to a Prophet from behind and above a physical object such as a tree (28:30) or fire (20:11). Inscribing on the Tablets (7:145) for Moses (P) is also an example of this type of revelation.
3. **Revelation by mediation of an angel:** In this type the Almighty God created the "Words" and via His Messenger (angel) delivers it to His chosen Prophet. In most of the instances the angel appears to the Prophet in a handsome human body and delivers the Message of God to him (11:81, 81:19). According to one interpretation the Prophets have rarely seen the angel in his real appearance, as in the case of the Prophet Muhammad (P) in his ascension (53:11).

Types of Revelation to Prophet Muhammad (P)

The Ayaat of the Quran and the various narrations confirm that Prophet Muhammad (P) has received revelations in all the above-mentioned types, although most of the time he has received the revelation via Archangel Gabriel. Prophet Muhammad (P) has received the 'Holy Narrations' (Hadith Qodsi) in the

[1] For instance see: 85:21-22, 73:4 and 56:77

[2] Al-Zarkashi, vol.1 p.277

[3] Al-Tabrasi, vol1. p.14

first type (al-Hakim2:4). Sometimes he has received the revelation of the Quran in the second form (al-Bukhari1). In most of the instances he has received the revelation in the third type. (al-Majlesi 18:268).

Time and Place of Revelation

Although the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (P) occurred in the cave of Hira at Mount Noor, there was never any restrictions of the times or places for receiving revelations. Sometimes he was receiving revelations whilst he was eating, praying, on the pulpit, riding his horse, etc. The revelation was also sometimes foretelling the future (30:2,3) or it would reveal after occasions or incidents, like the revelation about the Battle of Uhud (3:121-180) or the Battle of Bani-Nadheer (59:2-10). Sometimes he was asked a question and instantly the answer would be revealed to him (48:1-4), but in some other occasions it took more than a month for an answer to be revealed to him.

The Quran is the Words of God

There are three hypothetical possibilities about the authors of the words of the Quran:

1. The Author of the Quran is the Almighty Allah, both for its Words and the Concepts.
2. Gabriel has learned the concepts of the Quran from God expressed them in Arabic and delivered them to the Prophet (P).
3. Gabriel brings the concepts of the Quran from God to Prophet Muhammad (P) and the Prophet expressed them in the Arabic language for people.

Out of all the possibilities, the first is the only one that the Quran confirms. Thus, Muslims are unanimous that the Quran is the verbatim Words of God. The Quran explicitly states: ***"And verily, you (O Muhammad) are given the Quran from the All-Wise, All-Knowing."*** [27:6] Also see: 45:2 and 45:6

The Proofs

1. The Miracles of the Quran: Had the Quran been the words of Prophet Muhammad (P) it would have been possible to forge similar to it, as it has happened to his narrations (Hadith).
2. Confirming the previous Scripture yet correcting their perversions: A big portion of the Quran deals with the stories of the previous Prophets. Unlike the Bible the Quran is free from all perversions which occurred in the Bible. The Quran clears the false accusations allegedly related to the Prophets.
3. The style of It's addresses: The style of the addresses in the Quran confirm that the Quran is direct Words of God. It is not the indirect narration of the Words of God. For instance, more than 300 times God says to Prophet Muhammad (P): "Say" (Qol).
4. Gentle reproof: For instance, see 69:44, 9:43, 33:37. Bukhari and Muslim narrated from Ayesha that should the Prophet (P) have ever wanted to hide any Ayah he would have certainly hidden this Ayah: ***"But you did hide in yourself that which Allah will make manifest, you were concerned about people whereas Allah had a better right that you should be concerned about Him."*** [33:37]

The Revelation, the Elham, Hadith Qodsi and Prophetic Hadith

Technically speaking when we say 'revelation' we mean the Quran which is the actual verbatim Words of God.

'Elham' (inspiration) literally means to announce and cast to the heart. This is when a concept is found in the heart without learning it from anyone or even thinking about it. The gate of Elham is possibly open for all humans. In Islamic mysticism 'Elham' is referred to as Conceptive Vision' (Kashful-Ma'nawi).

The Hadith of Qodsi (the holy Narration) is mainly a collection of admonition and spiritual advices narrated from God via Prophet Muhammad (P). Its concepts- if authentic – is from God but the wordings are from Prophet Muhammad (P). The Hadith of Qodsi similar to other Hadiths whether they may or may not be authentic are subject to scholarly investigations.

The Prophetic Hadith is again the words of the Prophet (P) in explanation of the Islamic laws. Similar to Hadith of Qodsi, their concepts are from God but their wordings are from the Prophet (P). They however, differ from Hadith of Qodsi in that they are the narrations from God.

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Assignment

- If the Quran is the verbatim Words of God why in Chapter 81:19 after three times taking an oath, it states: "Verily, this (the Quran) is the Word of an honourable Messenger (Gabriel)." ?

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 5-6: Was the Holy Quran sent down gradually and all at once?

Abstract

One of the facts about the Quran is that its Ayaat were revealed gradually to the Prophet of Islam (P) in different places and at different times over a period of more than 20 years. Muslims are unanimous that the Quran–unlike the previous Scriptures[1]- did not come down from the heaven as a book.

1) "And (it is) a Quran which We have divided (into parts) in order that you might recite it to people at intervals. And We have revealed it by stages." [17:106]
2) "And those who disbelieve say: Why is not the Quran revealed to him all at once? Thus (it is sent down in parts) that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages." [25:32]

Was the Quran revealed gradually and all at once?

In spite of the above evidences, some of the scholars –both from the Shi'a and the Sunni schools- claimed that the Quran addition to its gradual revelation has also come down all at once in the Night of Qadr (Decree) in the month of Ramadan.

As for the recipient of this type of revelation they are of three different opinions:

1) Those of Sunni school claimed that the entire Quran has come down in the Night of Qadr from God to the heaven of this world and from there it has come down to the Prophet (P) gradually over 20 years. The basis of this opinion is a Hadith narrated fron Ibn Abbas.[2]
2) Of the Shi'a scholars who merely rely on the Narrations and are known as (al-akhbariyoun: Traditionalists) they claim that the entire Quran has come down to al-Baytul-Ma'mour (in the fourth heaven) and from there has come down gradually to the Prophet of Islam (P) over 20 years. The basis of this opinion is also some Narrations.[3]
3) The late Allama Tabatabaei while believing in gradual as well as the revelation of the Quran all at once asserts that the recipient of the Quran in its entire revelation similar to its gradual revelation was the Prophet (P) himself. However, he claims that there is a different reality for the noble Quran beyond its present format. The Almighty Allah sent down that 'reality' to the Prophet (P) in the night of Qadr and then throughout twenty three years or so, the detailed Quran was gradually revealed to him.[4] The main proof of his eminence is the claim that the Arabic term 'NAZAL' (sent down) if used in the category of 'Ef'al' such as 'Enzal' it means 'sending down all at once' whereas if it is used in the category of 'Taf'eel' it means 'sending down gradually'.

Analysis of the above claims

I suppose the followings are the main motivations of the above scholars for their claims:

1) The Almighty Allah in Sura 97 Aya 1 states: "Verily, We sent it down in the Night of Qadr." Similarly, in Sura 44 Aya 3 states: "Verily, We sent it down in a Blessed Night." Finally in Sura 2 Aya 185 the Almighty states: "The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran."
2) The second motivation which belongs to the Sunni scholars is the Ash'ari dogma of eternity of the Quran.[5] The have supported their dogma by a narration from Ibn Abbas in which it states that the entire Quran has come down to the heaven of this world.
3) The Shi'a scholars both the traditionalists as well as those such as the late Allama Tabatabei had faced another problem; i.e. the Narrations that indicate the Prophet of Islam (P) was

[1] Many narrations indicate that the previous Scriptures were revealed at once. See: al-Durrul-Manthour vol1. p.189, Tafseer al-Ayyashi vol.1 p.80. Aya 32 of Sura 25 is also implicit about it.
[2] Al-Soyouti; al-Etqaan, vol.1, p39,40
[3] Al-Sadooq, al-I'teqadaat, p.101
[4] Tabatabei, al-Mizan vol.2 p.16, vol.18,pp.130, 131, vol.20, pp.33--331
[5] See the first meeting of our course under 'Islamic Theology '

appointed a prophet on 27th Rajab a lunar Islamic month which is two months prior to Ramadan. The Almighty Allah appointed Muhammad (P) as a prophet by sending the first revelation to him. If the first revelation was sent down to him on 27th Rajab, then why the Quran says that the Quran was sent down in the month of Ramadan. To resolve this dilemma, the late Tabatabei (may God elevate his soul) has suggested two types of revelation and supported his claim with a linguist difference between 'Enzal' (as used in the Ayaat related to the Night of Qar) and 'Tanzil' (as used for the gradual revelation of the Quran).

Unfortunately, there are only a couple of Hadiths suggesting the 27th of Rajab for the beginning of the Prophet's mission narrated by Sh. Al-Kolayni[6]. The narrator of the first Hadith is 'Hasan Ibn Raashed' who has been weakened and hence his Hadith is weak. The second Hadith has a similar problem or worse. The narrator is 'Sahl Ibn Ziad' who is 'weak in his narration and unreliable'[7] and also he is narrated from an anonymous person.
The above narrations have also another problem and that is they contradict another Hadith narrated by 'Fadl' from Imam Reda (a.s) in which the Imam indicates that the Prophet (P) was appointed in the month of Ramadan and hence fasting of Ramadan has been made obligatory.[8] Amazingly, the late Majlesi in reconciliation between this Hadith and the other ones suggests that Imam Reda (a.s) may have announced that according to Taqiyya (Protection)!
Unfortunately, we can not agree with the late Majlesi for firstly this is not an issue especially for Imam Reda (a.s) to practice Taqiya in it, secondly the narrator –Fadl Ibn Shazan- is one of the renowned Shi'a scholars from Neishapoor.
Over all, even if we close our eyes from the transmitters of those Narrations, still they are not more than Khabar Wahid (Single Narrations) which as stated by the late Sh. Mofid 'do not provide any knowledge or practice'.[9]

Is there any philological difference between 'Enzal' and 'Tanzil'?
His eminence, Allama Tabatabei has claimed the term 'Enzal' in Arabic is used for sending down all at once, whereas 'Tanzil' is used for gradual sending. Let's examine the accuracy of this claim.
I believe his eminence has taken this idea from the famous philologist 'al-Raghib al-Isfahani (Husain Ibn Muhammad died in 502). Although al-Raghib is a very well respected philologist especially for the Quranic terms, here we can not agree with him for the following reasons:
1) The opinions of the philologists are not valid unless that support their claim by quoting some ample evidences from the Arabic literature and famous poems. For they as Muslims belong to a certain school of thought and their opinions could be shaped by the school they are coming from.
Distinguishing between the usage of 'Enzal' and 'Tanzil' by al-Raghib is one of the examples that al-Raghib is influenced by the school he belongs to. Al-Raghib was a follower of Shaafei' and his reason for the differences between 'Enzal' and 'Tanzil' is: "Allah mentions 'Enzal' not 'Tanzil' in 'Verily, We send it down (Anzalna= from Enzal) in the Night of Qadr' for what is **narrated** that the Quran is revealed all at once to the heaven of this world."
As you can see the source of his distinction between the two terms is the narration, not independent Arabic literatures. As we could not agree with the narrations we can not agree with al-Raghib either.
Moreover, other philologists have confirmed that there is no difference between 'Enzal' and 'Tanzil'. Ibn Manthour quoting from the well known Arabic linguist; Seebwayh says: "Abu-Amr used to diffrenciate between 'Enzal' and 'Tanzil' but did not mention any reason for it. Abul-Hasan said: I do not see any difference between them…"[10]
Above all, the usage of the terms under consideration in the Holy Quran leaves us without doubt that there is no difference between the terms. Consider the following examples:

1. The Quran is using the term 'Enzal' for sending down the rain. "And He sent down water from the sky" [2:22] undoubtedly, the rain does not fall all at once.
2. The tem 'Tanzil' is used for sending down the 'Torah' [3:93]. As mentioned earlier, many Narrations, as well as some Ayaat of the Quran indicate that the Torah was revealed to Moses (P) all at once.

[6] Al-Kaafi, vol.4 pp148, 149
[7] Al-Khoosi, Mo'jamul-Rejal, vol.8 p.337
[8] Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol. 18:190
[9] Tas-hihul-E'teqad, p.58
[10] Lesaanul-Arab, vol.14, p.111

3. The term 'Enzal' is used very often in the Quran and it is not meant for the revelation of the Quran in the Night of Qadr. See for instance: 5:67, 12:2, 6:92
4. The term 'Enzal' is used for sending the Quran for people, that obviously can not mean sending it down to them all at once. [4:174]
5. The term 'Tanzil' is used for demanding why the Quran was not sent all at once: [25:32]. You may claim that there is a context in the Ayah and hence it is not a valid evidence for our claim. In this case, we refer you to another example: [4:153]

Therefore, the distinction between 'Enzal' and 'Tanzil' has no basis in the Quran.
There still remains a question; what is the meaning of 'Verily We sent it down in the Night of Qadr"? If the Quran is not revealed all at once, then why is it that the Almighty Allah states: "The month of Ramadan in which We revealed the Quran"?

The answer is –and God knows best- because the first revelation has come to the Prophet (P) in the month of Ramadan, on the Night of Qadr, it is correct to say, the Quran- meaning the first part of the revelation of the Quran- is revealed in the month of Ramadan. For, as it is correct to refer to the entire Quran as 'the Quran', we can also refer to parts of it and calling it 'the Quran'. Thus, the Almighty Allah referring to the part of the Quran in the begging of the Chapter 12 states: "Verily, We sent down the Quran in Arabic that you may reflect." [12:2]. Surely, at the time of the revelation of Chapter 12 which was revealed to the Prophet (P) when he was still in Makka, the entire Quran was not revealed yet. Or when the Almighty is ordering the Prophet: "And recite the Quran in a slow style." [73:4] He is not asking the Prophet (P) to recite the entire Quran in part of the night that he wakes up for Prayers.

In conclusion, the Holy Quran is the last and the final and perfect Message of the Almighty to mankind. It has only been revealed to the Prophet (P) gradually as it has been stated clearly and without any ambiguity in the Quran. The first part of its revelation marks a turning point in human history. It indicates the commencement of the divine eternal blessings on mankind and hence deserves a special celebration and attention. Thus, the Night of Qadr; the first night and the first time the Seal of the Prophets received the revelation, marks the commencement of the divine blessing and hence is more worthy than one thousand nights.

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 7-8: Ayah, Surah, History of the Collection of the Quran

Abstract

- Ayah

Ayah and its plural 'Ayat' is used in the Quran in three seemingly different meanings:

1. **Sign:** [2:248]
2. **Miracle:** [2:211]
3. **Evidence:** 'And of His evidences (Ayaat) is the creation of the heaven and the earth."

Identification of the Ayah

If there is no grammatical structure governing the formation of an Ayah then how and who is supposed to decide which words/word/letters should be called an Ayah?

It is for this reason that we believe the identification of the Ayaat of the Quran are by divine confinement (al-Tauqifee), i.e. no human has any authority over it. The Almighty Allah states: ***"Ta Seen. These are the Ayaat of the Quran, and a Clear Book."*** [27:1]

Had the identification of the Ayaat been by humans they would have never been in the present order. For instance, ***"Alef Lam Mim Sad"*** (7:1) is one Ayah whereas similar to it such as ***"Alef Lam Mim Ra"*** (13:1) is not an independent Ayah. Similarly, ***"Ha Mim. Ayn Seen Qaf"*** ( ) are two Ayaat, but similar to that is ***"Haf Ha Ya Ayn Sad"*** (19:1) which is one Ayah. Why?

Number of Ayat

The most accurate record is what is narrated from Imam Ali (a.s) by Abdullah ibn Habib al Sulami. According to this counting, the Ayaat of the Quran are 6236. Today most of the copies of the Quran are according to this counting.

- **Surah**

Surah literally means 'high position and elevated status'. Tall buildings are also called surah. Arabs used to call the fortresses surrounding cities in the ancient times 'sur'. The term Surah is used in the Quran 10 times referring to parts of the Quran which are nearly similar to chapters. [2:23]

Names of the Surahs

It is more likely that the names given to the Surahs of the Quran are also by divine confinement (al-Tauqifee). Thus, although no Prophet's name is mentioned so repeatedly in the Quran as that of Prophet Moses; no chapter is named after him. Had the naming of the Surahs were by the choice of man they would have naturally named either of chapter 28, chapter 20 or chapter 26 in which the story of Prophet Moses is mentioned much, Surah Moses. Similarly, no Surah is named after Jesus though there is a Surah named after his mother Mary [19]. This is despite the fact that there are Surah in the Quran named after some Prophets whether lawmaking or not. Such as, Noah, Ibrahim, Hud, Lot, Yunus, Yusuf and Mohammad (p).

The Order of the Surahs

The discussion about whether the present order of the chapters of the Quran are by divine confinement or not depends on our opinion on the collection of the Quran, whether it is a man made effort or it was by divine confinement. Therefore, we invite you to the following discussion which is the most controversial part of the Sciences of the Quran

- **The History of the Collection of the Quran**

The science of the story of the collection of the Quran is surely one of the most controversial discussions of the Sciences of the Quran which has divided the scholars into two big groups: 1. Those who assert the Quran was compiled after the demise of the Prophet (p), this would include almost all Sunni scholars as well as some renowned Shia scholars such as the Late Allamah Tabatabaei and some of his students. 2. Those who believe that the Quran was compiled prior to the demise of the Prophet (p) by divine confinement and under the supervision of the holy Prophet (p). Some Shia scholars are the advocates of this opinion. The presenter of this course belongs to the second group.

The Meaning of Collection of the Quran (Jam')

By the term collection they mean either of the following meanings:

1. Collection of the Quran in the sense of its memorisation in the heart.
2. Collection in the sense of writing and compilation.
3. Collection in the sense of collecting all different accents and organising the Quran based on one authorised accent.

There is no dispute that the collection in the first sense of it did exist in the time of the Prophet. Collection in the third sense of it is also unanimously agreed upon by all scholars. The whole argument rotates around the second meaning of collection, i.e. whether the Ayaat or/and the Surahs of the Quran were collected as the present book prior to the demise of the Prophet or after his demise.

Note: It should be noted that none of the above opinions would conclude any alteration or perversion in the Quran for indisputably there is only one Quran and all it contains are the revelation of God to the Prophet (p) with no addition or omission.

The Proofs of the First Opinion

The adherers to the theory that the Quran was compiled after the demise of the Prophet (p) and during the reign of Abu Bakr and somehow Omar, rely mainly on the following reasons:

1. The Hadith of Zaid ibn Thabit: Al-Bhokari in his Sahih (vol.6, chapter of the collection of the Quran p.580) from Zaid ibn Thabit narrated:

"After the battle of Yamamah Abu Bakr sent after me. When I visited him Omar ibn Khattab was also with him. Abu Bakr said, 'Omar has informed me that during the battle of Yamamah the reciters of the Quran were killed and I am concerned that should this be repeated most of the Quran would be destroyed.' He asked me to order for the collection of the Quran, I said to Omar 'How can I do something that the Messenger of God did not do?' Omar said, 'By Allah, this is a good deed.' Thus Omar repeatedly visited me until the Almighty expanded my heart and I agreed with Omar. Then Abu Bakr said to me, 'You are a young and intelligent man, there is no accusation towards you and you were the one who used to write the revelation for the Messenger of God thus, search for the Quran and collect it all.

By Allah if I (Zaid) was ordered to move a mountain it would not be more difficult for me than the task of the collection of the Quran.' I said to Abu Bakr 'How can you do something that the Messenger of God did not do? ' Abu Bakr replied 'this is a good deed.' Thus Abu Bakr repeatedly called me until God expanded my heart in so much as He had expanded the hearts of Abu Bakr and Omar. I agreed and began searching for the Quran and collected it from the leaves of the palms and white stones as well as from the chests of people. Finally, I found the last two Ayaat of Surah 9 with Abu Khozaiymeh al-Ansari and I could not find them with anyone else. This collection of the Quran stayed (in hiding) with Abu Bakr until he died and then stayed with Omar until he died and then with Hafzeh the daughter of Omar."

Response

Unfortunately we cannot agree with the above narration for various reasons.

a) The above narration contradicts many other historical narrations, for instance Ibn Sireen said "Omar was killed and he did not collect the Quran." The late Ayatollah Khoei after quoting 22 narrations that are the main narrations in this field, elaborates in analysing them and explains the contradictions among them. Thus, all of them are nullified. In addition, you need to bear in mind that the above narration and the similar are only narrated by the Sunni scholars.
b) It seems that all these narrations aim at creating virtues for Abu Bakr and Omar to equalize their status with that of Othman during whose reign the unification of the Quran has taken place. Notice that in the above narration it is explicitly claimed that they are doing "something good that the Prophet did not do." Isn't this similar to the accusation they gave to the holy Prophet that he did not appoint anyone as his caliph before he died! Accepting the above narration means accepting that Omar and following him Abu Bakr were more concerned for the protection of the Quran than the holy Prophet of Islam (p).
c) If there is any truth in the above narration the motivation of Abu Bakr would not be more than having a copy of the Quran for himself as similar to some of the companions of the Prophet who historically compiled the entire Quran for themselves. It is for this reason that Abu Bakr hides the collection of Zaid in a box and so does Omar. Had they really been concerned for the loss of the Quran they would have made many copies of that original and spread it among the Muslims.

2. Various Shia and Sunni narrations have quoted that Imam Ali (a.s) committed himself to the collection of the Quran right after the demise of the Prophet (p). He had promised himself not to leave his home except on Fridays until he finished his task. It is narrated that his Quran was according to the order of the periods of revelation (chronological order) and he had mentioned the abrogating and abrograted Ayaat.

The Late Allamah Tabatabaei who is one of the renowned Shia adherents of the theory of the collection of the Quran after the demise of the Prophet asserts: "The meaning of the above narration (the collection of Imam Ali a.s) is one of the indisputable facts among the Shia. He further argues that should the Quran have been compiled in the present order at the time of the Prophet, would it have been possible for Imam Ali (a.s) to compile the Quran in a different format of that of the Prophet (p) which was based on divine confinement. His eminence therefore asserts: "The collection of the Quran in its present format must have certainly happened after the demise of the Prophet (P).[1]

Response:

The collection of the Quran by Imam Ali (a.s) as quoted in the Shi'a books of Hadith was about the interpretation of the Quran not the collection of the Quran itself. Thus, the Imam (a.s) has mentioned the abrogating and the abrogated, the Makki and the Madani and all details related to any Ayah. This collection of the Imam is referred to in many Hadith as "Al Jame'a" (the Comprehensive) or "Al Jaffr" (the Paper on which the Imam has written). These names indicate that the collection of the Imam was the Quran with its interpretation. For further study of the book of the Imam see Al Kafi 1:39 and Al Wafi 1:63 and Beharul Anwar 1:140.

3. The third proof is the gradual revelation of the Quran and the continuation of the revelation until the end of the life of the Prophet (p). The late Allamah Al Balagheh while mentioning this proof claims that this phenomenon could not make the collection of the Quran possible.

Response

The response to this claim is very obvious. We propose that as the Quran was being gradually revealed so would it be compiled. Many narrations suggest that Gibraeel (a.s) used to descend to the Prophet and ask him where the exact place of the revealed Ayah shall be. For instance, it is quoted in many narrations that when the last Ayah was revealed to the Prophet saying, "And be afraid of the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah" Gibraeel said to the Prophet to place it between Ayah 282 and 280 of chapter 2. Similarly, many narrations suggest that any time Bismillahe Rahmane Raheem was revealed the Prophet knew that the previous Surah was finished and a new Surah was commencing.

The Proofs of the Second Opinion

The second opinion is the opinion of those Shi'a scholars who hold the Quran, as it is today, was collected at the time of the Prophet (P) and under his supervision by divine confinement. The following are some of the main reasons:

1. There are many contradictions between the narrations about the collection of the Quran after the Prophet (P) and hence are nullified.
2. The Hadith of Thaqalayn that is narrated by both Shi'a and Sunni in which the Prophet (P) leaves two precious things, i.e. The Book of Allah and Ahlul-Bayt confirms that the Quran was a Book prior to the demise of the Prophet (P), not only a memory in the hearts of the believers.
3. The second famous name of the Quran as mentioned in the Quran is 'Book'. A book is something that is written and compiled. We suggest that Almighty has named the Quran also a Book for it must be compiled. As it was named 'the Quran' for it has to be recited.
4. It is not possible that the Prophet (P) has left the Ummah without compiling the Revelation, insomuch as it was not possible for him to leave the Ummah without any leader.
5. The Prophet (P) had scribes of revelation whose numbers varied from time to time from 23 to 43.
6. The present order of the Ayaat of the Quran as well as the Surahs leaves us with no doubt that it is just impossible for this Book in the way it is to be compiled by any human being. This is the actualization of the Words of God Who states: ***"Verily, We, it is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (the Quran) and surely We will guard it."*** (15:9) as He states: ***"It is for Us to collect it and its recitation."*** (75:17)

Unification of the Accents of the Quran

The Arabic writing during the early time of Islam did not have any *dots* or *signs*. With the spread of Islam various Arabs and non-Arabs used to recite the Quran with their own accent. Gradually, people of various tribes assumed only their pronunciation is correct and the rest are wrong. This would sometimes cause to make slight changes in the meanings of the words.

The issue was brought to the attention of Othman and by consulting some of the companions and with the endorsement of Imam Ali (a.s) all the various copies of the Quran were collected and burnt except the one which was according to the accent of the Prophet (P), i.e. the accent of Qoraysh.

[1] Al-Mizan, vol.12 p.128

In the Name of the Almighty

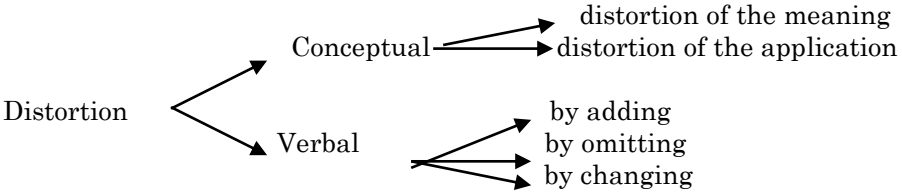
Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 9-10: A Myth Called Distortion of the Quran I

Abstract

Types of Distortion

The distortion of the Quran may be either verbally or conceptually. The distortion of the concept of the Quran may be also the distortion of the meaning of a term or distortion of the application of an Ayah. The first is like distorting the meaning of 'Wali' which means 'tho one who has the authority over someone else' to another meaning such as 'friend'. Distorting the application of the Ayah is such as unsuccessful attempts of Mo'wiyah who employed Samora ibn Jondab to forge a Hadith that the Ayah "And of mankind there is he who would sell himself, seeking the Pleasure of Allah." (2:207) is revealed concerning Ibn Moljam who had murdered Imam Ali (a.s)!

The verbal distortion of the Quran may be either by adding some words, an Ayah or surah to the Quran, or omitting some of the Quran or changing a word or an Ayah to another.



Undoubtedly the concept and the meaning of the Quran has been distorted. Many people have interpreted the Quran according to their whim and desire. Nonetheless, as this type of distortion does not change the actual text of the Quran it cannot mislead all people and hence does not affect the guidance nature of the Quran.

As for the verbal distortion of the Quran all Muslims are unanimous that no words are added to the Quran. Thus, the verbal distortion of the Quran by adding did not even occur. The Ayaat of the Quran are like shining stars in a dark night. If the Quran is mixed with any other Arabic text, the utmost eloquence of the Quran is well above any other human literature that its Ayaat will be easily distinguished.

The argument is about whether any Word, Ayah or Surah of the Quran is omitted or changed?

Absolute majority of the Muslim scholars whether Shi'a or Sunni denote the distortion of the omitting of the Quran as well. Although there are some narrations both form the Shi'a and the Sunni books that suggest that parts of the original Quran is omitted!

The analysis of those narrations is the theme of the next lesson. Here we shall mention the most important reasons for the un-distortion of the Quran.

The Proofs of the un-distortion of the Quran

1. **God has promised to safeguard it**

The Almighty Allah has promised that as He has sent down the Quran so is He protecting it:(15:9) and (41:41-42)

The expression of 'falsehood cannot come to it from before it or behind it' means it is protected against any corruption in all aspects. This would surely include the protection of the Quran from being omitted.

2. **Authentic Narrations**

The Prophet of Islam (P) and the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) in many authentic narrations have referred Muslims to the Quran in the matters of confusion.

a. Hadith of Thaqalayn.
b. The Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) have instructed their followers to examine the authenticity of a narration by examining if it contradicts the Quran or not. It is quoted from Imam Sadiq (a.s): "Any Hadith that is in accordance with the Book of Allah then take it and what is contrary to the Book of Allah then reject it."[1]

[1] Al-horr al-'Ameli, Wasa'elu-Shi'a vol.20 p.464

3. Rational proof

Islam is the last religion and the Quran is the final divine guidance for mankind. Had this Book similar to the previous Scriptures been distorted, the divine purpose of man's guidance would have not been fulfilled. Thus, the Quran must be protected against any distortion.

4. The history of Quran and its extra protection

4/1: From the advent of Islam to this date many Muslims knew the Quran by heart. Today hundred of thousands of Muslims across the globe know the Quran by heart. (Protection of the Quran in their hearts).

4/2: After the demise of the Prophet (P) Muslims were so responsive for the protection of the Quran that during the reign of the third Caliph they did not even allow different accents of the Quran to occur.

4/3: The style of the hand writing of the Quran sometimes is different from the standard Arabic writing. Yet, its unique style has been always preserved. For instance, twice in the Quran the ' Noon of Light Emphasis' is written with '*Alef*: 1) "Lanasfa'**an** BeNnasiya" (96:15), 2) "Wa Leyakoon**an** Mena-Sagherin" (12:32).

Also, the non-Arabic nouns in the Quran- different to the standard Arabic style- are written without any *Alef* . Thus, Ibrahim, Esma'il, Eshaq, Haroun, are all written in the Quran without *the middle Alef*.[2]

The difference between the Quranic styles of writing with the standard Arabic is counted up to 7000 differences.[3]

Most of the scholars of the sciences of the Quran agree that the writing style of the Quran is also by divine confinement. Thus, changing of it with the excuse of converting it to the modern Arabic – as it happens on the Bible- is not permissible.[4]

4/3: The grammar of the Quran sometimes does not comply with the normal Arabic grammar. Nevertheless, Muslims never changed any Words of the Quran for the excuse of 'grammatical correction'. Instead, they invented or expanded the grammatical rules in accordance with the Quran.

For instance, compare the Arabic term ' al-Saabe'oun' in Ayah 69 of the Surah 5 with the same term in Surah 2 Ayah 62.

5. Miracles of the Quran

There are different aspects to the miracles of the Quran that we shall deal with them in the future. Surely, the first aspect of the miracle of the Quran is its eloquence.

The miraculous eloquence of the Quran is in such as way that adding to or omitting any word from it would disturb its eloquence.

The Quran is like a symphony that changing a single note would disturb the harmony of the entire composition. The Ayaat of the Quran have their own measure changing an Ayah, adding or omitting it would destroy its measure.

6. Unique methods of the Quran for Its protection

6/1: The structure of the Quran is different from any other book. The division of the Ayaat and the Surahs, the variation of the subjects are all unique. Very often the Quran opens a subject to deal with, yet before finishing it goes to another subject and then again comes back to the pervious subject. For instance, Ayah 121 of Surah 3 opens the topic of the Battle of Uhud. The story continues to the Ayah 128. Then from Ayah 129 to 138 the topic of usury is discussed and then again from Ayah 139 goes back to the story of the Battle of Uhud! The same phenomenon is sometimes observed even within an Ayah such as Ayah 33 Surah 33.

6/2: The Surahs that are revealed to the Prophet (P) I Mecca especially during the first few years after the advent of Islam are usually short and much rhymed. This would make the memorisation of the Quran for the early Muslims who for the first time experience the Words of God much easier.

6/3: the gradual revelation of the Quran as discussed in the 2nd lesson coupled in many instances with the occasions under which the Ayaat were revealed would make it easier for the Muslims to memorise and remember the Ayaat of the Quran.

6/4: General rules: another unique style of the Quran- contrary to the Bible- is that the Quran does not normally deal with the details of a story. For instance, the Quran in many instances has praised or reproached certain people for their deeds. Yet, it hardly ever specifies their names except in a few instances such as concerning Abu-Lahab and his wife (Surah 111) who enmity to Islam was well known, or in the story of Zaid and Zaynab (Surah 33) for the purpose of protecting the fame of the Messenger of God.

For example, Ayah 33 of Surah 33 and Ayah 61 of Surah 3 are about the Prophet (P), Imam Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain (peace be on them). Also Ayah 55 of Surah 5 is revealed praising the generous donation of Imam Ali (a.s) and introducing him as the leader (Wali). On the other hand, Surah

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[2] For the best understanding of this proof you need to be acquainted with Arabic writing.

[4] See: Uloomul-Quran Endal-Mofasserin, vol.1 p.416 and Ayatollah Hasan Zadeh, Hasht resale Arabi, p.261

63 is revealed with reference to the chief of the hypocrites of Medina; i.e. Abdullah ibn Obay. Yet, none of these names are mentioned in the Quran. We only know about them from the numerous Hadith narrated by the Shi'a and the Sunni narrators from the Prophet (P).
Surely, should those names were explicitly mentioned in the Quran, their foes (when people were praised) or friends (when people were reproached) would have deleted the names.
Abu-Basir in an authentic Hadith asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) concerning 'those of you who are in authority' in Ayah 59 Surah 4: "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority." The Imam replied: "It is meant for Imam Ali, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (peace be on them)." Abu-Basir said: People ask as why the name of Ali and Ahulu-Bayt of the Prophet (P) is not mentioned in the Quran?
The Imam replied: "Tell them: Daily Prayers was prescribed to the Prophet (P), yet Allah did not mention the numbers of its Units, for He left it to His Messenger to explain it. Similarly, Allah prescribed Zakat, yet He did not mention to pay one silver for 40 Methqal of silver. He prescribed Hajj yet did not mention that the Tawaaf is seven times for He left the explanation of all of these to His Messenger."[5]

7. Quoting the Quran

Another way to find out the Quran is not distorted is that fact that in numerous Hadith that are narrated for us today, the Imams (a.s) quote an Ayah of the Quran or interpret and Ayah. There has never been an authentic Hadith that an Ayah is quoted in it which does not exist in the present Quran or is different from the present Quran.

8. Numerous Narrations

Another proof for the un-distortion of the Quran is the fact that the contents of the Quran as it is have been narrated by numerous people from generation to generation.

9. One Quran, many schools!

Finally the last but not the least way to prove the un-distortion of the Quran is that despite many sectarianism occurred in Islam, all Muslims irrespective of the sect they belong to adhere to exactly the same Quran.

Assignment:

Is the proof of un-distortion of the Quran by the Quran itself not a vicious circle? For it is could be that the above Ayaat are distorted!

[5] Al-Khoei, al-Bayan, p.251

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 11-12: A Myth Called Distortion of the Quran II

A) The Myth of Distortion of the Quran in the Sunni Narrations

1. Companions had different qurans!

Nearly all Sunni scholars agree that –based on their historical reports- the copy of the Quran of the Companions of the Prophet (P) were not the same. They mention many examples to show the quran of Obbay Ibn Ka'b, for instance was different from that of Ibn Mas'oud or Zaid Ibn Thabet, etc. The famous Sunni scholar 'Ibn Abi-Sajestani has compiled a book named 'Masaahef' (The qurans!) published by Darul-Kotobel-Elmeiyah' in Beirut to show hundreds of differences between those copies of the so-called Quran. The followings are only a few examples:

1/1: Many Sunni narrations indicate that Omar Ibn Khattab was reciting the last Ayaat of the Surah al-Hamd (Chapter 1) like this: "Serata Man An'amta Alayhem Ghayrel Maghdoube Alayhem Wa Ghayre-Dalleen."[1]

1/2: In the recitation (the quran of) Ibn Mas'oud it reads: "Wa Tazwwadu Wa Khayraz-Zadeh Taqwa."[2] Whereas in the Quran it reads: "**Wa Tazawwadu Faenna Khayraz-Zadeh Taqwa.**" (2:197)

Similarly, in the same quran of Ibn Mas'oud, Surah 103 is so read: "Wal-Asr. Ennal Ensana Lafi Khosr. Wa Ennahu Fihe Ela Aakhered-Dahr. Ellalatheena Aamanoo.." the underlined section is not found in the Quran.

Are the different versions of the Quran of the Companions not an indication of distortion of the Quran?

2. The Quran Was Compiled After the Prophet (P)

As we learned in lesson three, the absolute majority of the Sunni scholars believe that the Quran was compiled after the demise of the Prophet (P). Compilation of the Quran after the Prophet (P) and accepting only one version (of Zaid Ibn Thabet) our all different versions is indirectly accepting that the Quran had different versions and the then government acknowledged only one of them. This means nothing other than state-distortion.

3. Abrogation of recitation

Most of the Sunni scholars acknowledge a type of abrogation that they call "*abrogation of recitation*". The meaning of the abrogation of the recitation according to them is that some of the Ayaat of the Quran are deleted and are no longer recited and hence they don't exist any longer in the Quran. Sometimes the rules of those deleted Ayaat are still in order such as the Ayaat of Rajm (stoning to death) and sometimes even the rules are abrogated such as many Ayaat that are possibly deleted along with the rules and we have no knowledge about them.

B) The myth of distortion in the eyes of the Shia' scholars

The outstanding Shi'a scholars from the early days til date explicitly and without any ambiguity have denoted the claim of all different types of the verbal distortion of the Quran. They have always asserted that the present Quran is exactly the same as the Quran of the time of the Prophet (P).

In the following I shall mention the name of some of the most outstanding Shi'a scholars who have affirmed that the Quran was never distorted:

1. Fadl Ibn Shaathaan in his book (Al-Eidhah): He is one of the Shi'a scholars of the 3rd Century A.H. He has strongly reproached some of the Sunni sects (such as *Al-Hashwiya*) who believed in the distortion of the Quran.
2. Al-Shaikh Al-Saduq (Muhammad Ibn Ali) died in 381 A.H.
3. Al-Sheikh Al-Mufid died in 413 A.H.
4. Al-Sayyed Al-Mourtadha died in 436 A.H.
5. Al-Shaikh Al-Tusi died in 461 A.H.
6. Al-Shaik Al-Tabrasi died in 548 A.H.
7. Al Shaikh Abdul Jalil Al-Qazwini Al-Razi of the 6th Century

[1] Al-Masaahef, p.60 check the Quran to see the obvious differences.
[2] Ibid, p.65

8. Sayyed Ibn Tawous died in 664 AH.
9. Al-Allamah Al-Hilli who died in 726AH,
10. Al-Shaikh al-Bahaei who died in 1030 AH.
11. Mowla Mohsin al-Faydh al-Kashani who died in 1091.
12. Al-Shaikh al-Hur al-Amili who died in 1104.

c) The Late Mohadeth Noori in his book *'Sound Reasoning'* has categorised the narrations that he has relied on into 12 categories. Ironically, the narrations of 9 of the 12 categories are from Sunni sources. The followings are the brief response to all his points:

Category 1 – Narrations that are undoubtedly fabricated.

1. An example of such fabricated narrations are what Tabrasi in Al-Ehtejaj (The Argument) quoted that between the Word of God "**Concerning the Orphans**" and "**Then marry them**" [4:3] there has been many Ayaat and stories that contained one third of the Quran. They were all deleted by the hypocrites![3]
   The fabrication of this Hadith is so obvious for surely if any one claims that any part of the Quran is deleted there must be a limit for the deletion not that only between a *if-clause and the main clause* two to three thousand Ayaat are deleted!
2. Narrations from Ahmad Ibn Mohammad AsSayyari.
   Shaikh Noori has narrated more than 320 narrations from AsSayyari. Experts in Ilmul Rejal (The Science of Analytical Biography) have said with regards to AsSayyari: "His faith is wrong, he is an exaggerator and his opinion is far from the right path."[4]

Category 2 – Narrations in which the Quran is Mistaken with Holy Narrations (Hadith al-Qodsi)
For instance, Noori in his third category of narrations quoted from Al-Mustadrak (a well known Sunni book of Hadith) that Abu Musa al Ash'ari said to the reciters of Basra "We used to recite at the time of the Prophet a Surah that in terms of its length and severity was similar to Surat al-Bara'a [chapter 9] and I have forgotten it. Yet I remember only this part 'Had there been for the children of Adam two valleys of wealth he would have surely sought a third one and nothing would fill the hollow inside man except soil.'" Noori also quotes from the Sunni sources the so-called Surah al-Hafd and al-Khal' as mentioned earlier. Obviously these so-called Ayaat and Surahs – if to be authentic- are no more than Hadith al-Qodsi not the Quran.

Category 3 – Mixing the Quran with the Interpretation of the Quran
There are many narrations in the both the Shia' and the Sunni books of Hadith that the interpretation of the Quran is mixed with the text of the Quran. For instance, Nouri narrated from As Sounan compiled by Al-Beyhaqqi (a famous Sunni scholar) who quoted from Hafsa: "**Guard strictly the Prayers especially the Middle Prayer** and the Asr prayer **and stand before God with obedience**." [2:238] Hafsa said 'I bear witness that I so heard it from the Messenger of God."
The expression of 'and the Asr prayers' is not part of the Quran and hence what Hafsa meant is that the Asr prayer was expressed by the Prophet (P) as an interpretation for the Middle Prayer. Similarly, the phrase "concerning Ali" in the Aya **'O you the Messenger convey what is revealed to you'** concerning Ali 'from your Lord:'[5:67] in both the Shia and Sunni[5] narrations is in fact the interpretation of the Aya.

All the narrations concerning the differences between the Quran of Ibn Mas'oud and other companions mostly fits under this category of mixing the interpretation of the Quran with the actual Quran. The Quran of Imam Ali (p) that Abu Bakr and Omar refused to accept was also the Quran with its interpretation which was dictated by the Prophet (P) and written by Imam Ali (a.s). This type of interpretation of the Quran and any other text to mix the text with the explanation has been a common method among the scholars of the past and the present. Tafseer Al-shubbar and Tafseer Al-Asfa (of the Shia' scholars) and Tafseer Jalallain (of the Sunni Scholars) are examples of this type of mixing the explanation and the text.

Category 4: Narrations that Noori interpreted them to mean verbal distortion of the Quran

[3] Beharul Anwar 89:47
[4] Al-Khoei, Mo'jamu Rejalel-Hadith, vol.2 pp.282-283
[5] For the Sunni source see: al-Dorrul-Manthour, vol.2 p.298 under the interpretation of the Aya

The fourth category are narrations that speak about the distortion of the Quran without specifying whether verbal or contextual distortion. Noori has interpreted all these narrations to mean the verbal distortion of the Quran. For instance, Al-Shaikh Al-Sadooq in his 'al-Khesal' (a Shi'a source) quoted via Jaber from the Prophet (P) that one the Day of Judgment the Quran will complain and will say: "O my Lord! They distorted me and tore me apart."[6]
The above Hadith can only mean the contextual distortion of the Quran, or else it will contradict the divine promise of safeguarding the Quran. Moreover, al-Shaikh al-Sadooq as mentioned earlier is amongst many Shi'a scholars who denoted the verbal distortion of the Quran. Thus, he could not have narrated the above Hadith in his books unless he too understood the Hadith to mean contextual distortion.

Category 5: Narrations that indicate the Quran is of three or four sections:
Another proof of Noori is his reliance on the numbers of narrations that indicate a big portion of the Quran is revealed about the Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) or their enemies. Al-Kolaini in al-Kaafi (a Shi'a source) narrated via Asbagh Ibn Nobate from Imam Ali (a.s): "The Quran is in three sections; one third of it is about us and our enemies, another third is about the traditions and the examples (of the previous nations) and the third part is about the obligations and statutes."[7] Noori after quoting such narrations conclude that as we cannot find the third of the present Quran talking about Ahlul-Bayt (a.s), then it must be deleted from the original Quran.

The answer to this claim is obvious. The above narration is a deep interpretation of the Quran (al-Ta'wil). Anywhere in the Quran that the believers are addressed or praised, is it firstly meant for Ahlul-bayt (a.s), for they are the best examples of the believers and the pious people. Thus, the above narration means that the deep interpretation of one third of the Quran applies to Ahlul-bayt (a.s).

Category 6: Different recitations
Shaikh Noori in his last category of his proofs has relied on the issue of different recitations of the Quran to prove his claim for verbal distortion of the Quran.
The answer is firstly there is a difference between the different recitations and that of verbal distortion. Secondly, as I shall explain in the nest lesson the story of different recitations and revelation of the Quran according to seven or ten recitations is no more than a myth created by the Sunni scholars. The Imams of Ahlul-bayt (a.s) have explicitly denoted the myth.

Category 7: Rare Narrations
The last category is of the narrations that do not fit into any of the above categories. Such narrations are very few and at least for two reasons they must be rejected: firstly, they contradict the Quran and secondly the Shi'a scholars have disregarded them.

[6] Beharul-Anwaar, vol.89 p.49
[7] Al-Kaafi, vol.2 p.627

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 13-14: The Science of the Signs of the Arabic Alphabets & Makki and Madani

Abstarct:

With the expansion of Islam and the conversion of non Arabs as well as Arabs who did not meet the Prophet (P) reading the text of the Quran was the only possible way for new Muslims to understand it. However because the Arabic writing then lacked any signs for sounds of vowels, a new phenomenon called different recitations emerged. For instance the term Tatloo (تلا) in the Ayah " و یشلا لتا معتا علی ملک سلیمایط" (2:102) if it is considered without the 'dots' could be possibly recited either Yatloo (یلا) or Natloo (نلا) or Nabloo (بلا). To remove this problem the science of making dots and sounds of vowels of the Quran was created.

Putting dots on the words of the Quran

Today the Arabic alphabets are divided into two types; the ones without dots and the ones with dots. Some of the Arabic alphabets if their dots are disregarded they look exactly the same such as *ba* (ب), *ta* (ت), *tha* ( ) or such as *dal* (), *thal* ( ). Obviously, reading the Arabic texts without any signs of 'dots' and vowels is extremely difficult.

Most of the scholars agree that Abul-Aswad Doeli who was the companion of Imam Ali (A.S) was the first person who invented the science of syntax for the Arabic language.. According to historians he was an Iranian farmer from around Basra.

The Science of Symbol of Vowels

Putting vowels on the Arabic words are essential for correct reading. Today the level of the literacy of an Arabic student is examined by how accurately he can pronounce the words. As mentioned earlier Arabic language at the time of the Prophet (P) was free from dots as well as the symbols of vowels. Thus, recitation of the Quran for non Arabs as well as those who were not well acquainted with the Arabic language was extremely difficult. After invention of the dots for the letters Abul-Aswad invented the signs of Fatha (◌َ), Kasrah ◌ِ( ) and Damma◌ُ() for the correct pronunciation of the Quran. According to Qortobi the reason because of which Abul-Aswad created the signs for the Arabic alphabet was the following story:

"During the reign of Omar a Bedouin came to Medina seeking to hear the Quran. One of the Muslims recited Chapter 9 of the Quran to him during which instead of pronouncing Rasulohoo (سلا) in Ayah 3 he pronounced it Rasulehee (سلا This). mistake completely changed the meaning of the Ayah. Because if it was pronounced correctly it means "*Verily Allah is free from all obligations to the disbelievers and so is His Messenger*." Whereas the way that the Muslim man recited it meant wrongly: Verily Allah is free from all obligations to the disbelievers and His Messenger!' The story of the wrong recitation of the Muslim man reached Omar. He called the Bedouin and informed him about the mistake. He then announced that none other than the learned Muslims shall recite the Quran for people. He later appointed Abul-Aswad to create the science of Syntax."[1]

The science of recitations of the Quran

Another science of the Quran that has earned much attention by the Sunni scholars is the science of the different recitations of the Quran. Most of the Sunni scholars assert that the Quran is revealed with seven different accents. The Shi'a on the contrary believes that the Quran is the Word of Unique God and was pronounced by the Prophet (P) by only one accent; i.e. the accent of Quraysh which was the accent of the Prophet (P).

Zurara narrated in an authentic Hadith from Imam Baqir (A.S) " *Surely the Quran is one, came down from the One but the different recitations comes from the narrators.*"[2]

In another Hadith Fodhayl Ibn Yasar said to Imam Sadiq (a.s): People (the Sunnis) say: The Quran is revealed according to seven Letters (meaning seven recitations). Imam Sadiq (a.s): Said: "The enemies of God lied. Rather it was revealed in one Letter (recitation) from the One."[3]

The Historical Stages of the Recitation of the Quran

We can divide the trend of the recitations of the Quran into seven stages:

1. Recitation of the Prophet (P) to the companions.
2. Recitation of the companions to others:
3. Unification of the recitations at the time of Uthman.
4. Recitation of different cities such as Kufa, Basra, Damascus and Medina. Despite unification of recitations the problem of different recitations continued for the following reasons:

[1] Jameul Ahkam, 1:24
[2] Al Kaafi 2:630
[3] Ibid

a. Lack of dots and the symbols for pronunciations in the then Arabic writing.
b. Lack of Alif (ا) for the words that the Alif would be pronounced in the middle of a word. For instance Yokhadioon (يخادعون) and Yakhdaoon (يخدعون) would be written the same. And therefore some of the reciters in the 2nd century did not tell any difference between the recitations of the two words.
c. Influencing personal opinions.
5. Recitation of the *'Seven Reciters'*: From the beginning of the 2nd Century among many reciters of the Quran seven became the most popular, they were Asim, Ibn Amer, Ibn Katheer, Abu Amr, Hamza, Naafe' and Kesaei. Among these reciters only Ibn Amer and Abu Amr were Arabs.[4]
6. Compilation of different recitations of the Quran.
7. Limitation of recitations to the recitation of *the Seven Reciters*: In the fourth century Ibn Mujahed wrote a book called Al-Saba' (The Seven) in which he limited the recitation of the Quran into the Seven Recitation according to the recitation of the Seven Reciters.

Therefore, the phenomenon of the Seven Recitations of the Quran is nothing other than the personal selection of Ibn Mujahed in order for him to stop multiplication of the recitations of the Quran and to limit them to the first seven known reciters. Some of the Sunni scholars mistakenly have claimed that the recitations of the Seven Reciters are numerously narrated from the Prophet (P). We believe all these claims are fabricated and are spread by the followers of those reciters for the purpose of sanctifying their reciters. In Reality the Prophet (P) pronounced the Quran only with one accent which was his.

Question and Answer

The Sunni and the Shi'a have narrated that the Almighty God commanded the Prophet of Islam (P) to recite the Quran in Seven Letters or that the Quran was revealed in Seven Letters. The Sunnis based on this Ahadith have concluded that the Quran was in fact revealed in seven different accents.

Our response in short is that these narrations in the Shi'a books are not authentic and in the Sunni books needless to comment on them. Most possibly these narrations are fabricated to sanctify the Seven Reciters. Moreover, even if these narrations are authentic they do not necessarily mean the seven recitations of the Quran. For, they could mean – as explicitly mentioned in some of these narrations - seven main subjects discussed in the Quran or seven layers and degrees of interpretation of the Quran.

The Present Recitation of the Quran

The present and the ever recitation of the Quran is the recitation that is narrated to us from Hafs from his teacher Asem (one of the Seven Reciters) from his master Imam Ali (a.s) from the Prophet (P) from Gabriel from Allah. Hafs was one of the companions of Imam Sadiq (A.S). Asem; his teacher, was one of the companions of Imam Ali (A.S) and he was originally from Iran and was one of the eminent Shi'a scholars from Kufa.[5]

Note

Although the correct and the authentic pronunciation of the Quran is only one, there are many narrations from the Imams of Ahlul Bayt that non Arabs or Arabs who are unable to pronounce the Quran correctly should not be despaired from the recitation of the Quran for the Merciful God will elevate their recitation with the real accent of the Quran. Imam Sadiq (A.S) from his pure ancestors, from the Prophet (P): "Surely a non Arab person from my Ummah recites the Quran with his non Arabic accent but the angels take it up in accordance with the pure Arabic accent."[6]

The Science of Makki & Madani

Definition

Most of the scholars have accepted that any Ayah or Surah that is revealed prior to the Prophet's migration to Madina is Makki and the ones after his migration are Madani. Thus, Ayah 3 of Surah al-Ma'edah (Ch.5) is Madani although it was revealed in Hajjatul-Weda' (Farewell Hajj) in Arafa-Makka, and so is Ayah 58 of Surah Nisa' (Ch.4) although it was revealed in Ka'ba when Makka was conquered.

Problems of this classification

The Problem occurs when one part of a Surah is revealed in Makka and the other part in Madina. Should they be called Makki or Madani or something else? Scholars have not given any third name and hence they have named the Surahs based on two criteria: 1) We consider most of the Ayaat of the Surah in naming them Makki or Madani, 2) We consider the first Ayaat of every Surah. Therefore, if most of the Ayaat or the first Ayaat of a Surah were revealed, for instance, in Makka then it is Makki. For example, Surah Hajj (Ch.22) is Madani although the Ayaat 52-55 of it are revealed in Makka (prior to migration). Similarly, Surah al-Shoura (Ch.42) is Makki although the Ayaat from 23-26 are revealed in Madina. Surah al-Najm (53) is Makki but its 32nd Ayah is revealed in Madina. Surah al-Ahqaaf is Makki but its 10th Ayah is revealed in Madina and the like. In all the above examples the majority of the Ayaat of a Surah are considered in naming them Makki or Madani. On the other hand, Surah al-Nahl (Ch.16) is Makki although from Ayah 41 to the end of the Surah (more than 2/3rd of the Surah) was revealed in Madina. For, the first Ayaat of it were revealed in Makka. However, Surah al-Ankabout (Ch.29) is considered Makki although the first 11 Ayah of it were revealed in Madina!

Methods of Identification

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[4] Al-Borhan 1:329
[5] Al-Sadr, Ta'seesul-Shi'a ,p.346
[6] Al Kaafi 2:619

The scholars of the Quran have identified the Makki and the Madani Surahs mainly by relying on the testimonies of the companions of the Prophet (P) or the companions of the companions. Moreover, they have suggested some signs by which the Ayaat of Makki are to be distinguished from the Madani.

For instance, any Surah that its addressees are *'O you mankind'* is Makki and if the addressees are *'O you who believe'* is Madani. However, Surah al-Nisa' (Ch. 4) is Madani yet it starts with "*O you mankind*". Similarly, Surah al-Hajj (Ch 22) is Madani, yet its Ayah 77 is addressed to the believers.
Another way to identify whether the Surah is Makki or Madani is by the length of the Surah and its Ayaat. In general, the Makki Surahs are short and so are their Ayaat, whereas the Madani are long. Nonetheless, Surah al-An'am (Ch.6) with 165 Ayah is Makki and the length of its Ayaat is also similar to the Madani Ayaat. On the other hand, Surah al-Nasr (110) is Madani but it is a very short Surah.
The main subjects of the Makki Surahs are dealing with the principles of Islam such as monotheism, the Day of Judgment, and the Prophecy of the Prophets, whereas most of the jurisprudential rules of Islam are mentioned in the Madani Surahs. For instance, no Ayah with regards to Jihad was revealed in Makka. The following charts clearly indicate the trend of the subjects of the Quran during the years of Prophetic mission.

Chart 1: Percentage of the subjects of the Quran

1) Knowing God, Revelation, Quran	30%	1920 Ayah
2) The Hereafter	25/8%	1640 Ayah
3) Mission of the Previous Prophets	23/5%	1500 Ayah
4) Islamic Ummah & People of the Book	11/7%	736 Ayah
5) Statutes (Fiqh & Ethics)	7%	456 Ayah
6) Jihad	4%	260 Ayah
7) Creation, Man, Jinn & Satan	3%	190 Ayah
8) Family of the Prophet (P)	./35%	22 Ayah
TOTAL	**105/35%**	**6724 Ayah**

The total percentage is more than %100 and the numbers of the Ayaat are more than the actual numbers as some of the Ayaat include more than one subject.

Source: M. Bazargan, Evolution Du Coran, p.165

The Benefits
The scholars of the sciences of the Quran have paid special attention to identify the Makki and the Madani Ayaat. Al-Zarkashi quoted from Abul-Qasem al-Naisabouri: "The sciences of the Quran are 25 sciences. Whoever is not acquainted with them shall not speak about the Book of Allah. The most noble of all of these sciences is to know about the (time) of their revelation and the purposes of revelation of the Ayaat, the chronological order of the revelation of the Ayaat and whether they are Makki or Madani."[7]

Scholars assert that one of the most important benefits of knowing the Makki and the Madani Ayaat is to identify the abrogating Ayaat form the abrogated ones. To examine the extent of this claim we ought to learn about the concept of abrogation in the Quran; a very important science of the Quran that we shall deal with it in the next lesson.

Makki and Madani Surahs
The scholars are unanimous that 20 Surahs of the Quran are Madani. They disagree about the 12 Surahs and the rest that are 82 Surahs are believed to be Makki.
The agreed Madani Surahs are: al-Baqarah (ch.2), Aale-Emran (ch.3), al-Nisa' (ch.4), al-Ma'edah (ch.5), al-Anfaal (ch.8), al-Touba (ch.9), al-Noor (ch.24), al-Ahzab (ch.33), Muhammad (ch.47), al-Fath (ch.48), al-Hojorat (49), al-Hadid (ch.57), al-Mojadala (ch.58), al-Hashr (59), al-Momtahana (60), al-jom'a (62), al-Monafeqoon (63), al-Talaq (65), al-Tahreem (66) and al-Nasr (110).

The 12 Surahs that there is a disagreement about them are: al-Hamd (ch.1), al-Ra'd (ch.13), al-Rahman (ch.55), al-Saff (ch.61), al-Taghabon (ch.64), al-Tatfif (ch.83), al-Qar (ch.97), al-Bayyena (ch.98), al-Zelzal (ch.99), al-Ikhlas (ch.112), al-Falaq (ch.113) and al-Nas (ch.114).[8]

[7] Al-Borhan, 1:192
[8] Al-Itqan 1:12

	Percentage of the revealed Ayaat in the years of Mission																				
Subject	1+2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13+1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+ 11
Occurrence of the Resurrection Day	18	10	7	5	3/5	2/5	2	1/5	1/2	1	./6	./4	./3	./25	./2	./1	-	-	-	-	-
Heaven & Hell	16	28	18	15	14	12	10	8/5	7/5	7	6	5	4/5	4	3/5	3	2/5	2	1/5	1	./5
Resurrection and the Hereafter	34	38	25	20	17/5	14/5	12	10/3	8/7	8	6/6	5/4	4/8	4/25	3/7	3/1	2/5	2	1/5	1	./5
Previous Nations	7/5	10	13	15	17	18	22	37	26	18	13	8/5	4	3/5	3	2/6	2/1	2	1/5	1	./5
Struggles with Infidels of Qoraysh	3/5	7/5	8	8	8	8	8/2	9	16	13	11	8	6/2	5/5	5	5	5	4	3/5	3	4
Description of the Prophets	1/5	3	7	10	11	12/4	13/3	14	17	40	20	7/5	4/5	4	3	2/5	2/4	2/3	2	1	./5
Monotheism & Prophecy	22	23	23/5	24	24/5	25	26	27	28	29	30/5	35	28	27	25/5	25	24	22	20	17	15
Jihad	0	./1	./2	./3	./4	./5	1/5	3	3	4/5	6/5	8/5	12	15	13	12	10/5	9/5	9/5	8	5
Admonition of the Hereafter	10/5	9/5	9	9	9/5	10	10/5	11	11/5	13	13	15	16/5	18/	22	17/5	15	13	13	11	8
Man, Jinn & Satan	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	8	5	3	2/5	2/5	2/5	-
People of the Books	-	-	-	2/5	4	5/5	5/5	5/5	6	6/5	7	8	10/5	15	20	37	25	30	17	15	12
Islamic Ummah	./3	1	2	3	4/5	5	6	6/5	7/5	8	9	10/5	11	12	13/5	17	22	46	30	15	8
Statutes	7	5	3	2/5	2	2/5	3	3	3	3/5	4	5	6	7/5	8/5	10	13	17	30	65	45

Source: M. Bazargan, Evolution Du Coran, p.195

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 15-16: The Science of the Context of the Revelation [Asbabu-Nozoul][1]

Abstract

From the perspective of this science the Ayaat of the Quran are divided into two categories:

1) The Ayaat that are revealed without any particular circumstances. They aim primarily at guiding and educating mankind towards their salvation.
2) The Ayaat that although have the same aim and objective as the previous ones, they are revealed under certain circumstances or are in response to certain questions.

The circumstances under which the Ayaat are revealed hold the context of the Ayaat. Understanding such circumstances is called 'the science of the context of the revelation' ('Elme-Asbabu-Nozoul).

The Benefits of the Science of Asbabu-Nozoul

The Holy Quran is the text of the Words of God delivered to us after more than 1400 years. Undoubtedly, understanding the contexts of its sentences plays an important role in their understanding.

This science will become more vital when we consider the fact that the Quran –unlike the Bible- is not compiled in chronological order. As we learned in the previous lessons sometimes an Ayah which is revealed in Madina is placed- by the Divine Order- amidst the Ayaat of a Surah which is Makki, such as the last Ayah of Surah al-Mozzammel (ch.73). In other occasions even the beginning and the end of a present Ayah are not revealed at the same time, such as Ayah 3 of Surah al-Ma'edah (ch.5) and Ayah 33 of Surah al-Ahzab (ch.33). Therefore, to have a correct understanding of these Ayaat we ought to know their contexts.

In the following I shall site some examples to demonstrate the significance of understating the contextual meaning of the Ayah.

1) Ayah 115 Surah 2

The above Ayah seems to mean that facing the Qibla while praying is not a necessity. Any direction we face we are facing God and hence our prayers is on order. Nonetheless, Muslim scholars are unanimous that facing the Qibla is an obligatory condition.

The above misinterpretation of the Ayah will be disappeared when the context of the Ayah is understood. In one of the narrations, Ibn Abbas said: "The above Ayah is about changing of the Qibla. When the Almighty changed the Qibla of the Muslims from Baitul-Maqdes (Jerusalem) to Ka'ba, the Jews denied it and complained that it is not possible to change the direction of the Qibla. The above Ayah was revealed in response to them explaining that God can appoint any direction for His worship."

2. Ayah 93 Surah al-Ma'edah (ch.5).

Ignoring the context of the Ayah one may assume there is no diet restriction for a Muslim as long as he believes in God and does righteous deeds. This misinterpretation will soon disappear when the context of the Ayah is revealed.

When Ayah 90 of the same Surah was revealed in which all intoxications were strongly forbidden some of the companions of the Prophet (P) asked him: O Messenger of Allah! Some of us did believe in Allah and his Messenger and believed in the Hereafter. We even attended the battle of Badr and Uhud yet we used to drink alcohol for it was not then forbidden. Is there any reproach on us? Upon that the above Ayah was revealed declaring that the new law is not retrospective.[2]

3. Ayah 145 of Surah al-An'am (ch.6).

The phrase 'not…unless' grammatically indicates limitation of the rule of lawful and unlawful meat to what is specified. However, certainly the unlawful food is not limited to the above-mentioned categories. The meat of many wild animals as well as scaleless fish (according to the Shi'a) is unlawful.

The context of the Ayah is the solution to its correct understanding. To the pagans of Qoraysh the above four categories were all lawful. The Almighty Allah in response to their wrong belief states that nothing is forbidden but what you consider lawful. Thus, the limitation of the rule is relative not absolute for the context of the Ayah is not about listing all the forbidden foods.

4. Ayah 96 Surah al-Ma'edah.

In the year 6 AH. the Prophet (P) along with his companions dressed their clothes of Ihram for Umrah. On their way to Makka they saw many preys suitable for hunting. The animals were so closed to them that they could easily hunt them

[1] The most famous book in this science is 'Asbabu-Nozoul' compiled by al-Wahedi al-Nishabouri died in 468 A.H.
[2] Al-Tabrasi, Majma'ul-Bayan

with their spears. The above Ayah was revealed warning them that it is not lawful for them to hunt the land animal while they are in the state of Ihram.[3]
Therefore, the aim of the Ayah is to announce that when the pilgrims are in the state of Ihram they can only hunt the sea animals. The Ayah does not aim to describe what type of sea food is permissible and what type is not. Thus, the deduction of the Sunni scholars from the Ayah to allow all types of sea animals is incompatible with the context of the Ayah.

Generic term not a specific context

As important as the context of an Ayah is, in many instances it does not limit the rules to the people about whom an Ayah is revealed. For instance, the four Ayaat of Surah al-Mojadalah (ch.58) were revealed in relation to one of the Muslims of Madina (Ous) who had angrily divorced his wife (Khoulah) according to the Jahiliyyah culture of divorce. When the lady complained to the Prophet (P) about her husband the Ayah was revealed: "*Indeed Allah has heard the statement of her that disputes with you concerning her husband..."*

Many Ayaat of the Quran are revealed with reference to certain people. However, the rules are general and are not obviously limited to them. Thus, the Almighty Allah instead of mentioning their names He has referred to them utilising general 'relative pronouns' (her, those, etc) to indicate that although those people were the excuse of revelation of the rules, the rules are not limited to them.

It is worth mentioning that the general terms are not always as general as they seem to be. For instance consider the meaning of 'people' in the following Ayah:
"*Those unto whom the people said: Verily, the people have gathered against you (a great army)..." [3:173]*
Obviously 'the people' in the beginning and the end of the Ayah cannot be the same people otherwise it would have been said: 'the people said: Verily, we…' As usual the context of the Ayah is the key to the solution of the problem.
The above Ayah was revealed after the battle of Uhud when Muslims by the order of the Prophet (P) were mobilized to chase the pagans' army. Abu-Sofyan (the chief of the pagans) met with some of the men from the tribe of Abdul-Qays who were travelling to Madina to purchase some wheat. He requested them to scare Muslims and inform Muhammad (P) and his companions that Qoraysh has mobilized a big army to fight Muslims. When the men of Abdul-Qays conveyed the message the above Ayah was revealed.[4]

Problems of indicating Asbabul-Nozoul

As important the science of the context of the revelation is there are many problems in identifying the correct context of the Ayaat.

1. The first and the main problem is that unfortunately most of the narrations are *Morsal* (the chain of narrators are not mentioned). Moreover, very often the narrators of the stories are the companions of the companions of the Prophet (P) who were not the eye witnesses to the scenes. One of the reasons for this problem is the tragic fate of Hadith after the demise of the Prophet (P). As we know the Caliphs –particularly Abu-Bakr, Omar and Othman- had banned the narration of the Hadith.
2. Very often there are different and sometimes contradictory narrations for the context of an Ayah. The contradiction becomes more vivid on controversial issues such as the leadership after the Prophet (P).
3. Very often the authenticity and the reliability of the narrators are dismissed by a particular sect if the narration is against their doctrine. For instance, Husain Ibn Hasan al-Ashqari narrated that the Ayah 23 of Surah al-Shourah (ch.42) is about Ali, Fatima and their sons.[5] Yet, Ibn Katheer the famous Syrian Sunni scholar rejects the narration with the only excuse that the narrator (Husain Ibn Hasan) is Shi'a![6]
4. Finally in many instances the narrators have mixed up the actual context of the revelation with an application of the Ayah. For instance, al-Termethi in a narration that he considered it authentic narrated from Ibn Abbas: "A Jewish man said to the Prophet (P): O Abul-Qasem! Would it not be better had God created the heavens so and so and the earth so and so and the oceans so and so and mountains so and so and His other creation so and so? Upon that the following Ayah was revealed: "*They did not estimate Allah with estimation due to Him*…" [6:91]
   Al-Soyouti after quoting the above narration comments: "It should be that the Prophet (P) has just recited the Ayah in response to the Jewish man, not that it was then revealed for the Ayah had been revealed in Makka.[7]

[3] Al-Bahrani, al-Borhan 2:525
[4] Tabrasi, Majma'ul-Bayan
[5] Al-Tabarani, al-Kabeer: 2259
[6] Ibn Katheer, al-Tafseer 4:133
[7] Al-Itqaan 1:123

Semester 4
Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 9: The Science of Abrogation

Abstract

- **Significance**

Imam Ali (a.s) entered a mosque wherein a man was preaching and warning people about the hereafter. The Imam asked who the man was. He is just reminding people about God, replied one of the audiences. The Imam said: "He is not a preacher. He is a selfish man whose intention is to introduce himself." The man was brought to the Imam. He asked the man: "Can you distinguish the abrogating Ayaat from the abrogated one? "No", replied the man. The Imam said: "Then step out of our mosque and do not preach here."[1]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) asked Abu-Hanifah: Are you the jurist of the people of Iraq? Yes, he replied. The Imam asked: on which basis do you issue your verdict? On the basis of the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet (P), replied Abu-Hanifah. The Imam added: Can you distinguish the abrogating from the abrogated ones? Yes, replied Abu-Hanifah. The Imam said: You have claimed a vast knowledge.[2]

- **Definition**

Naskh literally means to abolish, to annul, to change or replace something with something else by authority. Thus, Naskh is an official or legal abrogation and cancellation of an order.

In the Shari'a law (Islamic canon law) when a law is cancelled and replaced with another law the cancelled law is called 'Mansookh' (abrogated) and the new law is called 'Nasekh' (abrogating) and the action is called 'Naskh' (abrogation). Naskh in jurisprudential law is similar to al-Bada' (changeable decree)[3] in the creation.

We must however bear in mind that the expression of 'abrogation' in Ahadeeth as well as the words of the early scholars would include 'general and specific' ' absolute and limited' and even 'if clause'.[4] It is due to this expression that the number of the abrogated Ayaat was much more in the eyes of the early scholars than the contemporary ones.

- **The Wisdom of Abrogation**

Educating of man about divine laws is similar to teaching mathematics to students. As the pupil grows mentally he will be taught more mathematical concepts. Thus, when a teacher teaches the second grade of mathematics it does not mean that he has changed his mind about the mathematic concepts taught in grade one. The difference however, between abrogation in the civil law and that of the religious law is that man in the civil law discovers more advanced laws and hence changes his mind about the previous law whereas, in divine law the Almighty God is all knowing about all matters and the changes of the law are due to mans different requirements in different times.

- **Abrogation in the Quran**

1. "Whatever an Ayah do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten (or to be delayed) We bring a better one or similar to it. Know you not that Allah is able to do all things? "(2:106)
2. "And when We change an Ayah in place of another – and Allah knows best what He sends down – they say: You are but a liar, nay but most of them know not. Say Gabriel has brought it down from your Lord with truth that it may make firm and strengthen those who believe and as a guidance and glad tidings to those who have submitted." (16:101, 102)
3. "Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Source of the Book. (13:39)

- **Conditions of Abrogation**

In order for us to consider a law abrogated by another, any of the following five conditions must be met:

1. There must be a real contradiction between the two rules, for instance if an Ayah of the Quran says to do something and another one is asking not to do it then either of them is abrogated and another one is abrogating.
2. The disagreement between the two laws must be in all aspects not partially or in some aspects.
3. The first law must not be temporary otherwise when the date expires the law naturally ends not that it is abrogated.
4. The subject of the two laws must be the same.
5. The abrogation only applies in the jurisprudential laws.

   The number of the abrogated Ayaat in the view of the scholars varies depending on the number of the conditions that they agree upon for abrogation.

   - **Types of Abrogation**

   The Sunni scholars have presumed three different types of abrogation in the Quran. Although we totally disagree with the first two types for educational purposes we shall discuss all of them.

[1] Al-Zarqani, Manahelul-'Irfan 2:174
[2] Kashani, Tafseer al-Saafi 1:22
[3] For the meaning of al-Bada' see: Islamic Theology Course, last part of meeting 5.
[4] For the meanings of these expressions see Principle of Jurisprudence, meeting 3.

1. Abrogation of rule and recitation: abrogation of rule and recitation means that an Ayah of the Quran is allegedly deleted along with its rule. Sunni scholars cite the following narration for this type of abrogation.
   Aisha said "*Among what was revealed was the law of ten times confirmed breastfeeding which was abrogated by five times confirmed breastfeeding. When the Messenger of God passed away the abrogating Ayah (five times breastfeeding) was still recited in the Quran*".[5]
   According to the Sunnis there has been an Ayah in the Quran indicating the law of being mahram to someone by ten times confirmed breastfeeding which the Ayah and its rule are all abrogated. This is despite the fact that there is no Ayah in the Quran indicating the number of breastfeeding whether five times or ten times, thus the Sunni scholars claim that the ten times breastfeeding is abrogated by the tradition.
   The problem of this type of abrogation is that it leads to the false claim of distortion of the Quran on the one hand as well as the false claim of abrogation after the demise of the Prophet (P). For, surely no law can be abrogated after the demise of the Prophet (P).
2. Abrogation of recitation but not the law: by this type of abrogation the Sunni scholars mean that an Ayah of the Quran is allegedly deleted but its rule is in order. The famous example of this type of abrogation for them is Ayah Rajm as discussed in meeting five. We believe the abrogation of recitation is void for it is nothing other than the false claim of distortion of the Quran.
3. Abrogation of the rule without the recitation: the meaning of this type of abrogation is that the rule of an Ayah of the Quran is abrogated although the Ayah itself exists in the Quran most of the examples of abrogation are in fact this type of it. In general, Muslim scholars are unanimous that this type of abrogation has occurred in the Quran although they disagree about the number of abrogated Ayaat and its examples.
   Abrogation of the rule without recitation can occur in one of the three following ways:
   3/1: Abrogation of the Quran by the Quran that means an Ayah of the Quran is abrogating another Ayah such as Ayah 13 of Surah 58, that it's abrogating its previous Ayah
   3/2: Abrogation of the Quran by a narration that is repeatedly narrated. For the example of this type of narration it is claimed that the rule of Stoning which is repeatedly narrated from the Prophet (P) has abrogated Ayah 2 of Surah 24. However, we believe that Ayah 2 of Surah 24 is generally talking about the law of Adultery, that the adulterer and the adulteress ought to be whipped one hundred times if the crime is proven in the Islamic court. The Ayah is silent about whether the rule applies to a married person or a single person whereas the rule of Stoning applies only to the married adulterers whether male or female. Thus, they lack the second condition of the conditions of abrogation.
   3/3: Abrogation of the Quran by a Single narration: this type of abrogation is not permissible as the validity of a Single narration is not the same as the Quran.

- **Number of the Abrogated Ayaat**

The early scholars were counting the abrogated Ayaat to be up to five hundred. The reason for this big figure was their inclusive interpretation of the term abrogation as mentioned earlier.
The contemporary scholars also disagree about the number of the abrogated Ayaat. Ayatollah Ma'refat considers the Ayaat to be only eight, the late Allamah Tabatabaei counts them to be only six and finally the late Ayatollah Khoei asserted that there is only one abrogated Ayah in the Quran i.e. Ayah 12 Surah 58.

- **Why Abrogated Ayaat are still in the Quran**

As mentioned earlier, the wisdom of abrogation is legislation in accordance to different requirements. Thus, although a rule is abrogated for its circumstances have changed it shall still be kept in the scripture should its circumstances be repeated. In such a situation it is the duty of a qualified jurist to understand the circumstances and issue his verdicts in accordance to required Ayaat whether abrogated or abrogating. For instance, it is claimed that the Ayaat of forgiving the infidels (Ayah 14 of Surah 45 and 109 of Surah 2) are abrogated by the Ayaat that are commanding to fight the infidels such as Ayah 29 of Surah 9. Nonetheless should Muslims of any age be in a similar socio-political situation of the early Muslims in Mecca and they live in a non-Islamic country as a minority their duty is to follow the rules of forgiving the infidels. This interpretation applies if we agree that the Ayaat of forgiving the infidels are abrogated. We however, suggest that the Ayaat are not abrogated for it is not permissible to fight all infields.

- **The Only Abrogated Ayah in the Quran**

Ayah 12 of Surah 58 states:
"O you who believe! When you consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation. That will be better and purer for you. But if find not (the means of it), then verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."
This Ayah is abrogated by its following Ayah which states:
"Are you afraid of spending in charity before your private consultation (with him)? If then you do it not, and Allah has forgiven you, then (at least) perform Salat and give Zakat and obey Allah. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do."

[5] Saheeh Muslim 2:1075

Assignment:. The Almighty Allah in 2:106 states that He may bring something 'similar' to the one that is abrogated? If the abrogating Ayah is similar to the abrogated one, why does it need to be revealed and why the previous one had to be abrogated?

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 19-20: The Science of the Miracles of the Quran

Definition of Miracle

A Miracle is a type of speech or an action that man without the Leave of God is unable to perform. The Arabic term for miracle is 'Mo'jezah' which is driven from 'Ajz' meaning 'to be unable'. Thus, 'Ajooz' means a very old man and 'Ajooza' a very old woman. The common term used in the Quran as well as the Bible for miracle is 'Ayah' (Sign) as it is a sign for truth of the Prophet as well as the sign of the Might of God.

The Holy Quran calls to challenge the Quran!

To prove the miraculous aspect of the Quran the Almighty God has invited man and jinn to the challenge of producing something similar to the Quran:

1. "*Say: If the mankind and the jinn were together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another*." [17:88]
2. "*And if you are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Quran) to Our slave (Muhammad), then produce a Surah (Chapter) of the like thereof and call your witnesses (supporters) besides Allah, if you are truthful. But if you do it not, and you can never do it, then fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers."* [2:23,24] Similar to this Ayah is also mentioned in Surah 10 Ayah 28
3. "*Or they say, "He (Muhammad (P)) forged it (the Quran). Say: Bring you then ten forged Surahs like unto it, and call whomsoever you can, other than Allah (to your help), if you speak the truth. If then they answer you not, know then that it (the Quran) is sent down with the Knowledge of Allah and that none has the right to be worshipped but He! Will you then be Muslims "* [11:13,14]

Some useful points from the above Ayaat

- Among the above Ayaat the first being the most comprehensive for it is inviting mankind and the jinn to the ever unsuccessful challenge of producing something similar to the Quran.
- The term 'Quran' in the Ayah does not necessarily mean the entire Quran for surely at the time of the revelation of the above Ayah the whole Quran was not revealed yet.
- The second Ayah is inviting the deniers of the Quran to produce even a Surah like unto the Quran. The shortest Surah of the Quran is Surah al-Kouthar (ch.108) which consists of only three short Ayaat. Yet, none has ever been able to produce anything similar to this Surah.
- Most of the 'Ayaat of the Challenge' were revealed when the Prophet (P) was still in Makka. This means, although the challenge has always been on, there has not been any further efforts from the disbelievers and hence no need for further invitation to challenge the Quran has been necessary.

Unsuccessful Challenges

The first person who dared attending the challenge was 'Mosaylama' a man from Yamama who claimed to be a prophet in the year 11 A.H. To his own assumption he produced a chapter similar to Surah al-Fil (ch.105): "The elephant, what is the elephant. And what made you understand what the elephant is. For it there is a disastrous tail and a long trunk!"[1] Every Arab would only laugh at this production and hence Mosaylama did not succeed in his attempt.

In the more recent years some evangelical anti-Muslim groups have produced a forged book called 'The True Furqan'. They claimed that they have been able, for the first time after 1400 years, to challenge the Quran. This book has being published in numerous copies in North America by two American companies (Omega 2001 and Wine Press) for free distribution among Muslims!

Apart from its feigned Arabic style, the Christian dogma of Trinity is mentioned in it more than the Bible! They have even named one of its chapters 'The Triune God'! All its chapters begin with the name of god the father, god the son and the holy spirit! Jihad is forbidden in it (for obvious reasons!) and divorce is prohibited!

Dimensions of the Miracles of the Quran

1. **Rhetorical Miracle**

Rhetoric is the art of using language effectively and persuasively**.** The first apparent miracle of the Quran is related to its rhetorical styles**.** The work of Al-Baqellani died in 403 A.H. called 'E'jazul-Quran' is the best and the most ancient book in rhetorical miracles of the Quran.

In the early years of the advent of Islam, the chiefs of Quraysh had banned listening to the Quran. The Quran in narration of that event states: "*And those who disbelieve say: Listen not to this Quran, and make noise in the midst of its (recitation) that you may overcome."* [41:26]

Ironically, however, the magnet of the Quran was so pleasant that the chiefs of Quraysh themselves could not but enjoy listening to it. Thus, they used to secretly listen to it.

[1] Tabatabaei, al-Mizan 1:78

Similarly, the conversion of 'Umar Ibn Khattab six years after the advent of Islam by listening to some of the Ayaat of Surah Taha (ch.20) is narrated by many historians.[2]

Linguists have usually divided man's literature into poetry and prose. The poetry and the prose have their own styles and literal frames. "The Quran –as accurately expressed by Taha Husain- is neither poetry nor a prose, it is rather **the** Quran. It is not poetry for it is not limited to the frames of poetry, as it is not a prose for it has its own unique styles of speech."[3]

Examples of rhetorical miracles of the Quran

1. The Holy Quran with reference to the law of equality in punishment (*al-Qisas*) states: "*And there is (a saving of) life for you in al-Qisas."* [2:179]

Prior to the revelation of this Ayah the common Arabic proverb for the equality of punishment was 'killing is more banishing for (another) killing."

Al-Soyouti; has listed twenty points whereby the Ayah of the Quran is more preferred than the Jahilliyah expression.

2. "*The Day when a **Maula** cannot avail a **Maula** in aught, and no help can they receive. Except him on whom Allah has Mercy*." [44:41-42]

The message of the above Ayah is to deny any type of help for anyone from anyone- be it from his direct family, relatives, friends, solicitors, etc. on the Day of Judgment. The Arabic term '*Maula*' has 27 different meanings. This is the best and the only word in Arabic to include any type of helper. Thus, the above message could not be possibly expressed in any better way.

3. "*And it was said: O earth! Swallow up your water, and O sky! Withhold (your rain. And the water was made to subside and the Decree (of Allah) was fulfilled. And it (the ship) rested on (Mount) Judi, and it was said: Away with the people who are wrong doers."* [11:44]

Unfortunately, no matter how well the above Ayah is translated it can never be equal to its Arabic text. This is definitely the most eloquent Ayah in the Quran and in Arabic literature. Arab linguists have discovered at least 30 different arts of eloquence that are utilized in the above Ayah.[4] That means the arts used in the Ayah are far more than the number of the words used in the Ayah!

When the Quran invited the disbelievers to challenge the Quran some of the most eloquent idolaters requested to have forty days to produce something similar to the Quran. During that time the above Ayah (11:44) was revealed. The rhetoric of the Ayah was so strong that the idolaters were left with no doubt that those words could not possibly be challenged by any human.[5]

2. Sublime Teachings and Educational Miracles of the Quran

Monotheism, for instance, is the bedrock of all divine religions. Prior to the revelation of the Quran the most that mankind knew about this concept was not further than the numerical unity of God (*Tawheed 'Adadi*). The holy Quran is the first Book in the history of mankind that educated man on the sublime concept of monotheism in the uniqueness of God (*Tawheed Ahadi*).

3. Unification and the Harmony of the Quran

Lack of discrepancies and a unique harmony of the Quran is another aspect of its miracle. The Almighty Allah states: "*Do they not then consider the Quran carefully? Had it been from other than Allah they would surely have found therein many a contradiction."* [4:82]

4. The Unseen News of the Quran

The Almighty Allah addressing the Prophet (P) states: "*This is of the news of the Unseen which We reveal unto you; neither you nor your people knew it before this.*" [11:49, and similarly in 3:44 and 12:103]

Apart from the histories of the previous Prophets some useful and amazing events that had taken place after Jesus Christ (P), but some centuries prior to the advent of Islam, are uniquely described in the Quran. The story of the People of the Cave as mentioned in Surah al-Kahf (ch.18) is the best example of this category.

One of the miracles of the Quran concerning the stories of the ancient nations is the different titles the Quran is using for different chiefs of the ancient Egyptian monarch.

The Scientific Miracles of the Quran

Examples of scientific miracles of the Quran are:

1. Pair in the World of Plants: The Swedish Biologist, Carolus Linnaeus known in Botany as 'The Prince of Botanists', died in 1778 and was the first who discovered the now commonly accepted fact that gender exists in the world of plants. Hence, he grouped all known flowering plants in male & female sex structures in his book 'Spices Plantarum'. This fact is clearly mentioned in two parts of the Quran. (13:3 and 31:10).

2. Gravity is Universal: Gravity is a force that attracts all objects in the universe. In other words, it holds all the objects in their due place by unknown pillars called the force of gravity. This fact is also mentioned in the Quran (13:2 and 31:10). [6]

5. The Numerical Miracles of the Quran

One of the best works in this field is compiled by the Shi'a scholar Dr. Abu-Zahra al-Najdi 'Menal-E'jazel-Balaghi Wal-A'dadi Fil-Quranel-Karim' (From the Rhetorical and Numerical Miracles of the Noble Quran).

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[2] For instance see Ibn Atheer in al-Kaamel 2:84,85

[3] Taha Husain in Men Hadith al-She'r Wa Nathr, p.25

[4] For the explanation of some of the main arts used in the Ayah see: Mohyeddin al-Darwish, E'rabul-Quran al-Karim 4:360-370

[5] Al-Tabrasi, Majma'ul-Bayan 5:165

[6] Many books are compiled on the scientific miracles of the Quran. The works of Harun Yahaya is perhaps one of the best easily available ones: http://www.harunyahya.com/miracles_of_the_quran_01.php

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 21-22: The Science of the Clear and Unclear Ayaat(al-Mohkam & al-Motashabeh)

Abstract

Significance

Of all the sciences of the Quran the science of understanding and distinguishing the clear from the unclear Ayaat is indisputably **the most** important science.

Definition

The term 'Muhkam' is driven from 'Hakama' which literally means 'prevented'.

A *Muhkam* Ayah means an Ayah that there is no ambiguity in understanding of its words and their meanings. A *Muhkam* Ayah is an Ayah that has an established meaning which *prevents* any other meanings. Thus, we suggest that '*Muhkam'* here means 'clear'.

The term '*Mutashabeh*' literally means something that looks like other things and hence causes confusion.[1] The Almighty Allah in the story of *the cow* of the Israelites quotes from them: "Verily, to us the cows are alike (and hence we are confused)." [2:70]

A '*Mutashabeh*' Ayah is an Ayah that its meaning due to different possibilities is not clear, and it is open to different interpretations. In other words, its apparent does not reflect its real meaning. Thus, we suggest that '*Mutashabeh*' means 'unclear' or 'ambiguous'.

Divisions of the Quran into Muhkam and Mutashabeh

The Almighty Allah states:

"*It is He Who has sent down to you the Book The Quran). In it are Ayaat that are Muhkam (clear), they are the foundations of the Book; and others are Mutashabeh (unclear). So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation they follow that which is unclear thereof, seeking mischief and seeking for its hidden meaning (according to their desire), but none knows its hidden meanings save Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. (They) say: We believer in it; the whole of it are from our Lord, and none receive admonition except men of understanding*." [3:7]

In the above Ayah the Almighty Allah is vividly dividing the Ayaat of the Quran into Muhkam and Mutashabeh. The Muhkams are the reference Ayaat which lay the foundation of the meanings of the Quran and to which one shall refer for understanding of the unclear Ayaat.

Is there any Unclear Ayah in the Quran?

Although the Quran is quite explicit that there are clear and unclear Ayaat in the Quran, scholars disagree as whether there is any ambiguous Ayah in the Quran. The followings are the main views:

1. There is no unclear Ayah in the Quran

The first view is of those who deny any ambiguity in the Quran. They claim that the Almighty Allah states: [3:138]
Had the Quran been ambiguous it would have not been a plain statement and a guidance.

2. The entire Quran is ambiguous

Contrary to the first opinion, the common view of the traditionalists (*Akhbariyyoun*) is that the entire Quran is ambiguous. The often base their view on the Ayah 23 of Surah al-Zomar.

3. There are clear and unclear Ayaat in the Quran

The soundest opinion is to suggest –as clearly mentioned in the Quran- that in fact there are Ayaat with clear meanings, as there are unclear Ayaat. We disagree with the first view for the following reasons:

a. Ayah 7 of Surah 3 clearly divides the Ayaat of the Quran into two categories of 'clear' and 'unclear' Ayaat.
b. We agree that the Quran is a 'clear statement' and 'guidance' for mankind, as stated in Surah 3 Ayah 138. However, this does not necessitate that all people have to understand the entire Quran. As long as they can refer to the experts who know the meaning of the Quran and learn from them, it is true to state that the Quran is a book of guidance for mankind.
c. We also agree that the Quran is a book which its Ayaat are well established as stated in the beginning of Surah 11. However, we suggest that it means the Quran in its essence and from the view of its Speaker is not ambiguous. Similarly, there is no ambiguity in the Quran for he to whom (P) the Quran was revealed.

Similarly to suggest that all the Ayaat of the Quran are ambiguous contradicts the Quran (ch.3 Ayah 7). Ironically, they have even referred to the Quran (ch.39 Ayah 23) to prove their point!

In conclusion, there is a way to reconcile between the first view and the third, i.e. the Quran in its essence is clear, although some of its Ayaat are ambiguous for majority of people due to their own ignorance.

The Number of the Unclear Ayaat

[1] Mutashabeh sometimes means look alike without any confusion. This term is so used in Ayah 23 of Surah al-Zomar (ch.39) as mentioned in the previous lesson.

Some of the contemporary scholars of the Quran assert that the unclear Ayaat of the Quran in comparison to the clear ones are very few. He[2] suggests that the unclear Ayaat do not exceed two hundreds in number. Moreover, many scholars of the Quran suggest there is no unclear Ayah in the jurisprudential Ayaat of the Quran.
Unfortunately, we can not agree with any of the above claims. Surely, the definition of the scholars for the unclear Ayah applies to more than two hundred Ayaat. Similarly, some of the jurisprudential Ayaat of the Quran are also ambiguous, or else, there would not have been any jurisprudential differences among the Muslims.

The Most Ambiguous Ayaat of the Quran

1. al-Horoof al-Moqatta'a (the Separated Letters): Twenty-nine chapters of the Quran are prefixed with certain letters of the Arabic alphabet that no one can assert their meanings.

2. Ayah 102 of Surah al-Baqarah (ch.2): According to Allamah Tabatabaei the possible meanings of this Ayah are 2^4 x 3^9 x 4 which is over one million possibilities![3]
3. Ayah 7 of Surah 3: Amazingly part of the Ayah that divides the Quran into clear and unclear Ayaat is also one of the most controversial unclear Ayaat. As the ambiguity in this Ayah is related to our discussion, I shall elaborate on it.

The Almighty Allah in part of Ayah 7 Surah 3 states:
"*and none knows its hidden meaning save Allah, and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge (they) say: We believer in it.*"
If there is a comma and hence we pause after 'Allah', then it means only Allah knows the meaning of the unclear Ayaat, whereas if there is no comma after Allah and the term '*and'* after Allah is a coordinating conjunction[4], then it means Allah as well as those who are firmly grounded in knowledge know the meaning of the unclear Ayaat.

The scholars of the Quran hold three different views for recitation of the above Ayah.
1. **Recitation of Pause**: (Majority of the Sunni scholars)
2. Recitation of Conjunction: (Majority of the Shi'a scholars)
3. Both Recitations are correct: (Some scholars from the both sides)
Why the recitation of conjunction must be preferred?

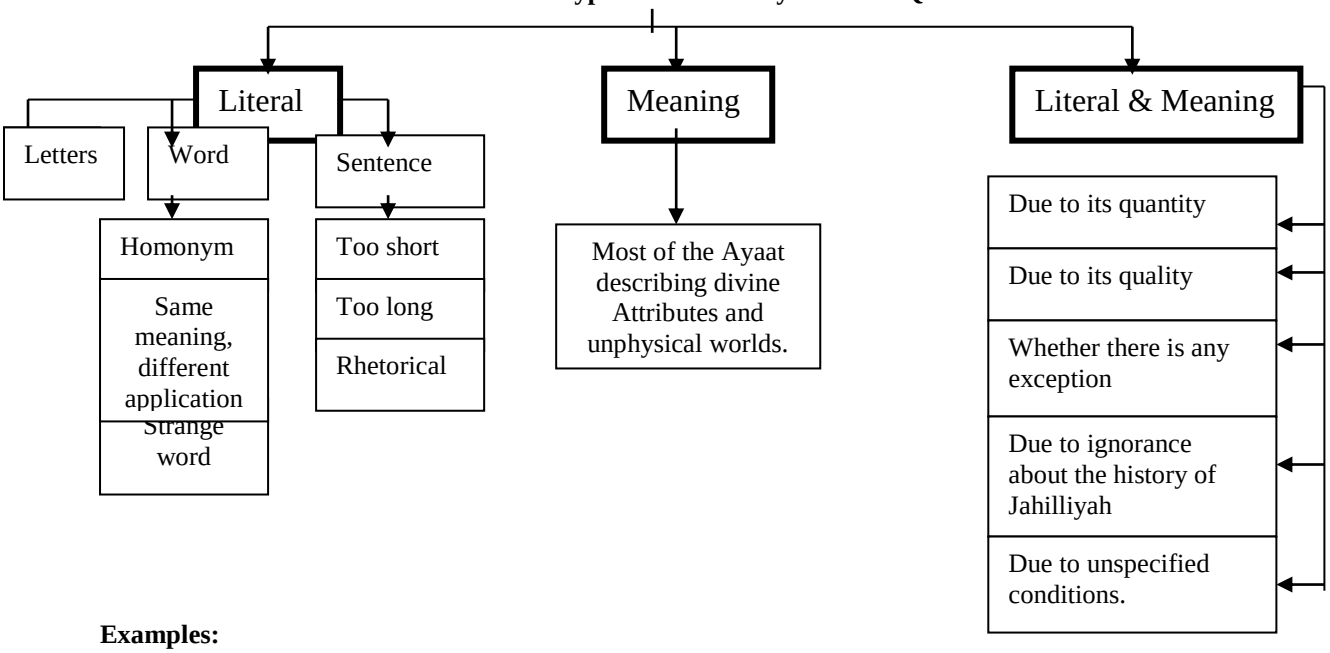
We agree with the second view that the term 'and' in the Ayah is for coordinating conjunction. In addition to the Ahadeeth of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) we can suggest the following reasons for the preference of the second view:
a. There are many Ayaat in the Quran that confirm 'people of knowledge' know the meanings of the unclear Ayaat. Consider these Ayaat: [29:49] and [16:43, 22:7]
b. The Quran is the book of guidance. How could Allah command man to reflect on the Quran whilst he is unable to understand quite a big portion of it?!
c. The expression of *'and those who are grounded in* ***knowledge****'* obviously shows a preference for those learned people over others. That means they have obtained type of knowledge that other don't.
c. The result of the first view is to suggest that even the Prophet (P) does not know the meaning of the unclear Ayaat! Would it be possible for a Muslim to hold this view?!
d. Throughout the Islamic history many Muslim scholars whether Shi'a or Sunni have interpreted the entire Quran.

Why there is ambiguity in the Quran?

In our course on 'Philosophy of Religion' we dealt with this question from the theological as well as linguistic views (lesson 25, 26). In short the followings are some of the main reasons for the phenomenon of ambiguity in the Quran.
1. Ambiguity and none restriction of a word to one particular meaning is part of the nature of human language.
2. The advantage of the Quran is that the above phenomenon is treated by revelation of clear Ayaat.
3. Very often the ambiguity is related to the lack of knowledge of the reader of the Quran not the text itself.
4. Many so called ambiguous Ayaat are in fact considered today ambiguous due to misinterpretations of the varies Islamic sects that emerged throughout history.
5. In linguistics there is a discussion as whether or not it is permissible for a speaker to mean more than one meaning for his statement. We discussed the topic in 'semantic issues' of our course on 'Principles of jurisprudence' and concluded that there is no problem to use a homonym and even mean all of them.

[2] Ibid p.14
[3] Al-Mizan 1:233, 234
[4] Note that '*and*' in Arabic language is not always used for coordinating conjugation. It is also used for initiating a new sentence as it occurs very often in the Quran.

Types of Unclear Ayaat in the Quran[5]



Examples:

1. **Letters:** The example of the unclear letters are the *'Separated Letters'* (al-Horooful-Moqatta').[6]
2. **Homonym**: The examples of a word which has more than one meaning in the Quran are: "Qaswarah" (74:51) which means 'hunter' and 'lion'. Both of the meanings in the Ayah could be meant. Similarly, 'As'as (81:17) means the arrival of the night as well as its departure.
3. **One meaning, different applications:** For example, the expression 'by the Ten Nights' (89:2) could mean the first ten nights of Muharram, or the last ten nights of Ramadhan or the first ten nights of Thol-Hajjah, etc.
4. **Strange Word:** Such as 'Abb' (80:31) which means herbage[7].
5. **A sentence that is too short:** Such as "*And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, then marry women that are pure for you."* [4:3]
   The sentence is too short and hence often the correlation between marriage and not being just to the orphans is not understood.
   Another example is "*And He was in the highest part of the horizon. Then He approached and came closer*." [53"7-8]
   It is not clear who is exactly meant by 'He' in the Ayaat.
6. **A sentence that is too long:** such as "*Laysa Ka Methlehee Shay'*" [42:11] which literally means: There is nothing like the like of Him. This might confuse the reader that as if there is something like unto Him but nothing is like the one that is like unto Him. The reason for confusion is '*Ka*' which is extra and should not be translated.
7. **Rhetorical arts:** There are many examples in the Quran for this cause of ambiguity. For instance, The Almighty Allah with regards to submission and humbleness to parents states: "*and lower unto them the wing of humility through mercy."* [17:24]
   Man does not have wings and hence, the expression of wing is a figure of speech. Similarly, when Allah states: "*the Hand of Allah is over their hands*." [48:10] it should not be read literally.
8. **Due to its quantity:** For instance, the Almighty Allah states: "*then kill the Mushrikin."* [9:5] Surely, the command does not include all the Mushrikin, but as it is not specified in the Ayah, it has made it unclear.
9. **Due to its quality:** For instance, the Almighty states: "*then marry whom is pure for you."* [4:3] It is not specified in the Ayah whether marriage is compulsory or preferred, as the command (marry) includes both of them.
10. **Whether there is any exception:** For instance, Allah states: "*O you who believe! Be dutiful to Allah as He should be dutiful to."* [3:102] the meaning of the Ayah should be understood with Ayah 16 Surah 64 in which Allah states: "*So keep your duty to Allah as much as you can."* [64:16]
11. **Due to ignorance about the history:** For instance, the Almighty states: "Surely, al-*Nasee'* is an addition to disbelief." [9:37]
    'Nasee' was an Arabic practice during the time of Ignorance in which they would postpone the Sacred Months to justify their wars.
12. **Due to unspecified conditions:** for instance, the Almighty Allah has commanded in many Ayaat of the Quran to praying and paying charity, yet their conditions are not specified.

Is it permissible to interpret the unclear Ayaat?

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[5] Al-Raagheb, al-Mofradat, under 'Motashabeh' with some changes and additions.
[6] The Separated Letters are the best example of the *Motashabehat*.
[7] Soyouti narrated that Abu-Bakr and Omar did not know the meaning of 'Abb'. 'al-Etqan' vol.2 p.4-5

The general rule concerning the unclear Ayaat is to interpret them according to the clear Ayaat which are the *'mother of the Book'* and the source of reference. Thus, to understand the meaning of "*and He is with you wheresoever you may be."*[57:4] we shall refer to "*There is nothing like Him*." [42:11] which its meaning is clearer and conclude the '*accompaniment*' of God with man means His Might, Knowledge and Supervision over him.

For further Studies

1. al-Qadhi Abdul-Jabbar; Motashabehul-Quran
2. Ibn Shahr Ashoub; Motashabehul-Quran Wa Mokhtalefoh
3. al-Ma'refat; al-Tamheed, vol.3

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 23-24: Analysis of Some of the Unclear Ayaat (Paradoxical Ayaat)

Abstract

1. Monotheism or Pluralism (the Paradox of I or We)

The Almighty Allah very often utilises the plural pronoun of 'WE' to refer to deity. For instance, the Quran uses this plural pronoun 22 times with reference to creation.

The following are the main answers suggested by Muslim scholars:

1. 'WE' is an expression for God and His agents:

The Divine Attributes of Action are acts that the Almighty God fulfils via His agents. For instance, God sends the revelation to the Prophets, creates humans and sends rain etc. through His angels. Thus He states:

- *"And We send down pure water from the sky." [25:48]*
- *"Surely, We have sent down to you the Book." [4;105]*

Problem:

This suggestion is not compatible with the pure concept of monotheism. The agents of God are not equal to Him to refer to them as 'We'. Besides, the Almighty God has used the plural pronoun when describing the creation of angels too. *"Or did We create the angels female while they were witnesses?"* [37:150]

Moreover, there are many contradictions to the above suggestion. For instance see: [2:130] [22:75] [7:144] [21:73]

2. 'WE' is an expression of Glorification:

In the Arabic language similar to many other languages, 'We' is not necessarily for a numerical plural. It is often used for glorification and exalting. This usage is commonly used by the kings and the heads of the states when issuing a statement. The expression of 'We' in the Quran is therefore exclusively for the glorification of God. Ignoring this linguistic point most of the translators of the Quran Muslims and non-Muslims, Shia and Sunni alike have mistranslated Ayah 59 of Surah 56. The correct translation is: "Is it you who created, or are We the Creator (without **s**)?"

2. Determinism or Free Will

While it appears from many Ayaat of the Quran that Allah condones the concept of determinism many other Ayaat confirm free will. Thus, Imam Fakhr Razi (died 606AH) who was Ash'ari and believed in Determinism cites numerous examples throughout his interpretation of the Quran to prove the dogma of Determinism. On the other hand, Zamakhshari (died 538AH) who was Mo'tazeli and believed in Free Will cites many Ayaat in the Quran in his interpretation of the Quran *'Al-Kashaf'* to prove Free Will. Amazingly, the two groups referred to Ayah 35 of Surah 6 to prove their doctrines. The Almighty God states, *"And had Allah willed, He would have gathered them together (all) on true guidance."* The Determinists refer to the Ayah to conclude that the reason that all mankind do not believe in God is because God did not so will. Thus, all of man cannot believe in God for it is against the will of God. On the other hand, the followers of Free Will refer to the same Ayah to conclude that had God willed He would have been able to make all men –like angels- to be guided and be obedient to Him without any Free Will of disobeying Him. But God did not so will and hence man has Free Will to choose good or evil. Further explanation and the correct answer should be sought in my article *'Einstein's Paradox'*. [http://www.ihic.org.au/articles.php?a_id=47]

3. Who Guides Who Misleads – God, Man or Satan?

The concept of guidance and misleading is also one of the very paradoxical concepts in the Quran. The question is, whether or not man is in charge of his misguidance or is it the will of God or Satan is the cause of man's deviation from the right path?

a- Some of the Ayaat of the Quran hold man responsible for his deviation: [2:108], [2:16]
b- Other Ayaat of the Quran hold some men the cause of misleading others: [20:79]
c- Some of the Ayaat of the Quran introduces Satan as the cause of peoples misguidance: [36:62]
d- Sometimes man and the jinn are the causes of misleading:[41:29]
e- Many other Ayaat of the Quran introduces Allah as the cause of guidance and misguidance:[4:88],[35:8]

The followers of fate in justification of their doctrine refer to the Ayaat in which guidance and misguidance are introduced as acts of God. On the other hand, the followers of free will quote the Ayaat that hold man responsible for his misguidance.

We suggest that there is no contradiction between the above Ayaat, mans guidance and misguidance are the effects of several causes some of which are internal and related to mans lust and desires while others are external and are introduced to him by Satanic Jinn and man. Thus, it is correct to relate misguidance to man as well as the Jinn as parts of the causes of misguidance. Similarly, relating guidance and misguidance to God is also correct in that it is He who provided the means of guidance and misguidance for mankind. For instance, Allah has created a physical law in this world called gravity. When a suicidal person jumps off a cliff, he would not have died had the law of gravity not existed. Thus, in a sense God is the cause of his death although He is not responsible for he has misused the law of gravity. Similarly, the Almighty Allah has shown man what leads him to guidance and misguidance and has left the decision making to him. It is Allah who has given the property of guidance and prosperity to piety and righteousness and it is Allah who has given the property of misguidance to

oppression and disbelief. Therefore, although Allah guides whoever He wills and makes go astray who He wills, He never wills a pious man to go astray nor does He will to guide an oppressor for there are no such properties in their actions. Please reflect on the following Ayaat: *"And He misleads thereby only those who are the rebellious."* [2:26] "*And Allah will cause to go astray those who are wrongdoers."* [14:27] "*Thus Allah leaves astray him who is a musref (a criminal)."* [40:34] "*Thus Allah leads astray the disbelievers."* [40:74] "*Whoever follows My Guidance he shall neither go astray, nor shall be distressed."* [20:123]

Therefore, when a man abuses the facilities provided to him by God he will go astray. Allah states, *"So when they turned away, Allah turned their hearts away and Allah guides not the people who are Fasiqeen (the rebellious)."* [61:5]

4. Paradoxical Statement Due to Different Conditions

One of the aspects of the paradoxical statements in the Quran is due to different circumstances and conditions. For instance, the Almighty Allah sometimes invites His Messenger to agree on peace with the infidels: [8:61]

However, somewhere else He clearly prohibits calling for peace: [47:35]

The Almighty Allah sometimes invites the believers to forgive the disbeliever and tolerate their mistakes: [45:14]

But somewhere else in the Quran He is commanding the believers to fight the disbelievers whenever they find them: [9:5]

The solution of such paradoxical statements rests with the consideration of different circumstances and people. For instance, Ayah 14 of Surah 45 was revealed to the Prophet (P) when he was in Makka wherein the Muslims were in minority. The Ayah also applies to those Kuffar who insult Muslims ignorantly. In such circumstances, it is the duty of Muslims to forgive the wrong doers. Ayah 5 of Surah 9, on the other hand, is a military command that is issued during a battlefield. Similarly, the recommendation to peace is for a situation wherein making peace would be beneficial for Muslims, but if calling for peace is a military trick then it is the application for Ayah 35 of Surah 47 in which making peace with the enemies is prohibited.

5. Paradoxical Statements Due to Variety of Aspects of a Narration

The stories of the Prophets are narrated in various parts of the Quran. These narrations sometimes seem a little different from each other. For instance, the conversation of Moses to his family on the way to Egypt (a.s) when he saw the fire is narrated quite differently in three different chapters of the Quran:

a. *"When Moses said to his household: Verily, I have seen a fire; I will bring you from there some information, or I will bring you a burning brand, that you may warm yourselves."* [27:7]

b. "*When he saw a fire, he said to his family: Wait! Verily, I have seen a fire; perhaps I can bring you some burning brand therefrom, or find some guidance at the fire."*[20:10]

c. *"Then, when Moses had fulfilled the term, and was travelling with his family, he saw a fire in the direction of Tur (mountain). He said to his family: Wait, I have seen a fire; perhaps I may bring you from there some information, or a burning fire-brand that you may warm yourselves."* [28:29]

This minor variety is due to a linguistic art. Very often the Quran conveys its teachings through narration of the stories of the previous nations and Prophets. As such sometimes it is necessary to repeat a story for different concepts it contains. However, to avoid *verbal repetition* at every narration one aspect of the story is mentioned. For verbal repetition reduces the eloquence of the narration.

6. Paradox Due to the Arts of Rhetoric

Sometimes the Ayaat of the Quran seem paradoxical if the reader is not familiar with the Arabic rules and the arts of rhetoric. The followings are some examples of such paradoxical statements.

6/1: The Almighty Allah has stated in fives different parts of the Quran that the heavens and the earth are created in six periods. (6:54, 10:3, 25:59, 32:4 and 50:38)

On the other hand, according to the description of Surah al-Fossel (ch.41) the total period of the creation of the heavens and the earth seem to be eight periods:

"Say: Do you verily disbelieve in Him who created the earth in <u>two Days</u>? And you set up rivals with Him? That is the Lord of the worlds. He placed therein firm mountains from above it, and He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance in <u>four Days</u> equal for all those who ask. Then He rose over towards the heaven… then He completed and finished from their creation (as) seven heavens in <u>two Days</u> and He made in each heaven its affair." [41:9-12]

The solution of the above paradox is that in the above Ayah the art of '*deletion*' (Hazf)[1] is utilised. In the Ayah "*and measured therein its sustenance in four Days*", the phrase 'in the rest of' or 'all of which was' is deleted. Thus, the Ayah has been like this: "*and measure therein its substance in (the rest of) four Days*." Or "*and measured therein its sustenance (all of which was) in four Days."*[2] Thus, according to the above Ayaat the earth and all its details are created in four periods and the heavens in two periods the total of which will be six periods.

6/2: Another paradox in the above Ayaat appears about the order of creation of heaven and the earth which contradicts the scientific discoveries as well as the Quran itself. See: [79:27-33]

The solution of this paradox is that the Arabic term '*Thomma*' (then) is used to express a proceeding action or description. The term 'then' in the Ayah under consideration is used for proceeding description. That means the Almighty Allah describes

[1] Hazf or Tajrid is one of the rhetoric arts related to the meaning of the sentence. This art is very often used in poetry and rhetoric literature. Another example of 'Hazf' in the Quran is mentioned in the story of Yusuf: "*And ask the town where we have been.*" [12:82]. The meaning of 'ask the town' is 'ask the people of the town', the deletion of 'the people of' is an art of Hazf. For further explanation about the art of *deletion* see: al-Taftazani, Sharh al-Mokhtasar, p.166

[2] Zamakhshari, al-Kashaf.

the creation of heaven after the description of the creation of the earth, although the creation of the heaven occurred prior to the earth. The purpose of this type of description is to introduce to man the creation of the world around him and then the world above him.

Course name: Sciences of the Quran ('Uloomul-Quran)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 25-26

The Science of the Tafsir

Abstract

1) Ibn Manzour says: Tafsir is literally from FASARA which means to make things clear.
2) Torjani suggested that Tafsir is from SAFARA which means to disclose and unveil something. Travelling is called 'Safar' for it unveils the manners of the travellers. An unveiled woman is called 'Saaferah'.[1]

Etymology of Tafsir

Arab philologists have suggested two possible roots for the term 'Tafsir'.

Whether 'Tafsir' is driven from SAFARA or FASARA it means to unveil and reveal the unknown. Thus, the science of Tafsir is defined "*To endeavour in understanding the meanings of the Ayaat of the Quran as far as possible for man.*"[2] In short, Tafsir is the 'interpretation' of the Quran.

Self-Opinion Interpretation

Many Prophetic narrations denounce the interpretation of the Quran based on self-opinion (Tafsir Ber-Ra'y).

The prohibited self opinion interpretation of the Quran can mean one of the following types of interpretation:

1) An interpretation of the Quran without any scholarly support. For instance, if someone interprets the Quran without being acquainted with the basic sciences necessary for understanding the Quran, he would interpret the Quran according to his own assumption.
2) An interpretation of the Quran which aims at supporting and justifying a wrong doctrine be it jurisprudential, theological, philosophical, mystical etc. A wrong doctrine is the one which is contrary to the basic teachings of Islam.

Ta'wil and its meaning

Ta'wil is one of the key terms in the Quran. It is driven from 'AWALA' which means to return. The term *Ta'wil* is used seventeen times in the Quran. Ta'wil according to the ancient scholars was a synonym to the word Tafsir of the Quran. Tabari (died in 310 A.H.) for instance called his book on the interpretation of the Quran "Jaame'ul-Bayaan An *Ta'wil* al-Quran."

Considering the usage of the term in the Quran, one can quite confidently suggest that the Ta'wil of the Quran is the exploration of the more in-depth meaning of the Quran whereas the Tafsir is, understanding the apparent meaning of the Quran.

There are many examples of Ta'wil of the Quran in the Hadiths of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s). For instance, the two seas in the Ayah "*He has let loose the two seas meeting together*" [55:19] has been mentioned to mean Imam Ali (a.s) and Fatima (s.a). Also, the pearl and coral coming out of them [55:22] is interpreted by Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) to mean Imam Hasan (a.s) and Imam Husain (a.s).

Another example is in Ayah 205 of Surah al-Baqarah: "*And when he turns away, his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle, and Allah likes not mischief.*"

It is narrated from Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) that the above Ayah is about Mo'awiyah.[3]

Is Ta'wil the prohibited self opinion Interpretation of the Quran?

There is a profound scholarly debate as to whether such hidden interpretations of the Quran are permissible or they are the examples of the forbidden self interpretation of the Quran.

Majority of the Sunni scholars denounce such interpretation considering them the most vivid examples of interpretation of the Quran based on the persons whim and assumptions.

The Shi'a on the other hand believe that firstly the Ta'wil of the Quran –for those firmly grounded in knowledge- based on our understanding of Ayah seven in Surah Al-Imran [ch.3] is permissible.[4] Surely, the Ahlul-Bayt of the Prophet (P) are the best examples of those firmly grounded in knowledge of the Quran and

[1] Kashaf Estelahatul-Fonoun, vol.2 p.1115
[2] Al-Zarqani, Manahelul-Irfan 1:470, Dezfouli; Qanoon Tafsir, p.46
[3] For many other examples see Tafsir al-Borhan and Tafisr Nooru-Thaqalayn.
[4] The reasons for this permissibility were discussed in lesson 10.

hence if the narration from them is authentic, their Ta'wil is valid and will never be the example of prohibited self opinion interpretation of the Quran.
In fact, the in-depth interpretation (Ta'wil) of Ahul-Bayt (a.s) is either introducing a valid example for an Ayah (such as the application of Ayah 205 of Surah 2 on Mo'awiyah), or it is unveiling the hidden meanings of an Ayah without denying its apparent meaning.
In general, the permissibility of the Ta'wil of the Quran is based on two principles:

1. Using a term and meaning more than one meaning from it, is possible. As mentioned in the previous lesson we believe it is well possible for a speaker to use a homonym term and mean more than one meaning of it. For instance, it was possible for Romeo to mean both of the meanings of 'grave' in his words: "Tomorrow you shall find me a grave man."
2. The hidden interpretation (Ta'wil) shall not contradict the firmly established Islamic principles.

The Basic Sciences Necessary for the Tafsir of the Quran
Most of the scholars condone the scholarly interpretation of the Quran so far as the interpreter is well acquainted at least with the following fifteen sciences.[5]
1. Philology (Fiqhu-Logha)
For instance, he should be aware of the difference between the term 'Sadda' صدّ (with Saad), and Sadda سدّ (with Seen) or else he would fall into the common mistake of mixing the two terms.
Sadda صدّ (with Saad) in Arabic means to hinder or turn away; to disorder, whereas Sadda سدّ (with Seen) means to block. Satan and his followers can never block (Sadd with Seen) the Right Path though they may hinder (Sadd with Saad) the Path. The Almighty Allah states: "*Verily, those who disbelieve and hinder (Saddu- with Saad) from the Path of Allah; they have certainly strayed far away*." (4:167)
2. Syntax (al-Nahw)
In lesson six we mentioned a story about the significance of Arabic syntax in understanding the meaning of the Quran.
3. Morphology (Tasrif)
For instance, the past tense 'Sadda' صدّ (with Saad) has two different present tense; i.e. Yas**o**ddo (to hinder), and Yas**e**ddo (cry aloud). The first is used many times in the Quran and the latter is used in Ayah 57 Surah 43.
4. Etymology (Eshteqaq)
For instance, the meaning of the appellation of 'Maseeh' for Prophet Jesus (a.s) would be different depending on whether it is driven from 'Seeyaha' (travelling), or 'Masaha' (to touch).
5,6,7. Rhetoric (al-Ma'ani, al-Bayan and al-Badee')
The Quran is the most eloquent Arabic text. To understand the rhetoric of the Quran one must be well acquainted with the Arabic science of rhetoric.
8. The Science of Recitations
9. Principles of Islam (Usool-u-Deen)[6]
The best understanding of those Ayaat depends largely on acquaintance with the principles of Islam.
10. Principles of Jurisprudence (Usool-ul-Fiqh)[7]
11. Jurisprudence (Fiqh)
12. The Science of the context of revelation (Asbabu-Nozoul)
13. The Science of Abrogation (Naskh)
14. The Science of Hadith
15. A Gifted Knowledge (Elmul-Moheba)
Soyouti in definition of this type of knowledge says: "This is a knowledge that Allah grants to those who practice what they learn." The Quran is the book of guidance for the pious people. Thus, to understand the Quran one must be pious. Allah the Almighty states: "*So be pious and Allah teaches you. And Allah is the All-Knower of each and everything*." [2:282]

A Glance at the Most Important Books of Tafsir
a. Narrative Tafsir
1. Jame'ul-Bayan An Ta'wil[8] al-Quran (Complete Explanation on Ta'wil of the Quran); known as Tafsir Tabari; written by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (died in 310 A.H).
2. al-Dorrul-Manthour Fil-Tafsir al-Ma'thour (Dispersed Pearls in interpretation of the Quran); written by Jalalu-Din Soyouti (died in 911 A.H).

[5] Soyouti, al-Etqan, vol.4 p.213-216
[6] http://www.ihic.org.au/courses.php?cat_id=5&a_id=
[7] http://www.ihic.org.au/courses.php?cat_id=9&a_id=

[8] By *Ta'wil*, Tabari means its ancient meaning which was another name for Tafsir.

3. Tafsir Forat al-Koufi; by Forat Ibn Ibrahim Koufi. He was the contemporary of al-Kolayni died in 329 A.H.
4. al-Borhan Fi Tafsir al-Quran (the Proof in interpretation of the Quran); by Sayyed Hashim al-Bahrani (died in 1107 A.H)
5. Tafsir Noor al-Thaqalayn (The Light of Two Precious Things); by Abd Ali Ibn Jom'a al-Howayzi al-Shirazi (died in 1112 A.H).

b. Theological Interpretation of the Quran
The best example of theological interpretation of the Quran is the work of Imam Fakhr al-Razi (died in 606 A.H.). His Tafsir is called "Mafatihul-Ghayb" (The Keys of the Unseen) or "al-Tafsir al-Kabir" (the Great Tafsir).

c. Rhetorical Tafsir
An example of a rhetoric Tafsir is the works of al-Zamakhshari (died in 538 A.H). Al-Zamakhshari is one of the leading figures in Arabic linguistics. He named his book "al-Kashaaf An Haqaequ-Tanzil Wa Oyounel-Aqawil Fi Vojoohe-Ta'wil" (the Guide on the Realities of the Revelation and the Springs of Opinions in Aspects of Ta'wil).

d. Mystical Tafsir
1. Kashful-Asrar (Disclosure of Secrets) by Rashidu-Din Maybodi. (lived in the 6th century).
Kashful-Asrar is one of the most ancient mystical interpretations of the Quran in the Farsi language.
2. Bayanu-Sa'ada Fi Maqamatel-E'bada (Description of Prosperity in the Status of Worshipping); by Soltan Muhammad Janabazi (died in 1327 A.H).

e. The Most Important Shi'a Tafsir
1. **al-Tebyaan Fi Tafsir al-Quran** (An Explanation on the Interpretation of the Quran) by al-Shaikh al-Tousi (died in 460 A.H).
2. **Majma'ul-Bayan** (Confluence of Explanation) by Fadhl Ibn Hasan al-Tabresi.
Al-Tabresi was one of the great Shi'a scholars of the sixth century.
3. al-Mizan (the Scales); by the late Allamah Tabatabaei (died in 1402 A.H)
4. **Tafsir Nemoune (The Exemplary Tafsir)**; under the auspicious supervision of Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi. (May God prolong his life)

A Word from Imam Khomeini (r.a)
The late Imam Khomeini in his introduction to his 'Explanation on the Hosts of Intellect and Ignorance' whilst appreciating the efforts of all the scholars on the interpretation of the Quran, asserted that most of the interpreters of the Quran strayed from the main purpose of the revelation of the Quran. According to His Eminence, indulgent in rhetorical, philosophical and historical analysis of the Quran will turn the readers away from the main purpose of the Quran. He vividly states: "What we mean is that the purpose of the Quran and the Hadith is purification of the intellects and the souls to obtain the highest level of monotheism. However, most of the interpreters of the Quran and the Hadith have not paid any attention to this point, although this is a fundamental principle in the Quran and the Hadith."[9]

Hermeneutics of the Quran
Hermeneutics is a new approach to the study of the Scriptures. It is originally a Greek name which means to translate and interpret. *Peri Mermeneias* meaning ' on the interpretation' is the name of one of the chapters of Aristotle's famous book 'Organon'.
The controversial discussion in the hermeneutics of the Quran is whether the text of the Quran is silent and hence open to any understanding and interpretation, or the Speaker (Allah) has meant a particular meaning. Religious pluralists insist that the Quran is silent and hence any understanding of the Quran could be valid.
There are ample examples in the Quran to refute the above claim. We have dealt with this claim in 'Philosophy of Religion' under the heading of 'The Grammar of Religious Language'.

The Gems of the Holy Quran
To end this lesson I would like to share with you some of the most important Ayaat of the Quran. In my humble opinion memorising and practicing these Ayaat are the secret keys to our prosperity both in here and in the hereafter. Although all the Ayaat of the Quran are unique gems, I have called them the Gems of the Quran.
1. Surah al-Hamd
2. Surah Tawhid (al-Ikhlas)
Chapter 112 of the Quran is the article of monotheism in Islam.

[9] Imam Khomeini, Sharh jonood Aql Wa Jahl, p.11

3. Bismillahe Rahmane Raheem
The bismillah is the most honourable and greatest Ayah of the Quran. It is closer to the Greatest Name of Allah than the pupil of the eye to its cornea.
4. Ayatul-Kursi
Ayah 255 of Surah al-Baqarah (ch.2) is known as Ayatul-Kursi (Kursi literally means footstool). Numerous narrations emphasise on its extra significance. The Prophet (P) said to Abu-Thar that it is the best Ayah of the Quran.[10] The Greatest Name of Allah is part of this Ayah and its recitation provides miraculous protection.
5. Ayah for Monotheism in Actions
Ayah 78 of Surah al-Nisa (ch.4) specially the phrase "*Say: All things from Allah*" is the most profound Ayah in Monotheism in Actions.
6. Ayah forTaqwa
The most important Ayah on Taqwa- in my opinion- is Ayaat 71 and 72 of Surah Maryam (ch.19). In these two Ayaat, the Almighty Allah emphatically declares that all mankind shall enter the Hell, but He will only save the Mottaqin (those who have gained Taqwa) from the Fire.
7. Ayah for Noble Character
Remembering and practicing Ayah 34 and 35 of Surah Fosselat (ch.41) will guarantee and solve most of our family and social conflicts.
8. Ayah for Shame
The Almighty Allah in Ayah 14 of Surah al-Alaq (ch.96) states: "*Knows he not that Allah does see?!*" Remembering this Ayah with faith is the best prevention from sins.

9. Surah al-Takathur, Ayaat 5-7: *Nay! If you knew with a sure knowledge. Verily, You shall see the blazing Fire (Hell)! And again, you shall see it with certainty of sight!* These Ayaat are evident proofs that seeing the hereafter while in this world is possible if one reaches the 'certain knowledge'.

10. The most hope-giving Ayah of the Quran
The Almighty Allah states: "*And verily, your Lord will give you so that you shall be well-pleased.*" [93:5].

Final Will
Dear reader!
All the previous lessons were no more than an introduction for sailing in the eternal ocean of the Holy Quran. The Quran is the verbatim Words of the Almighty and His manifestation and trust in our hands. Let's be grateful to this unique blessing and bring it more to our daily lives.
The Arabic text of the Quran is not more than 600 pages. That means if you learn only one page of the Quran you can learn the meaning of the entire Quran in less than two years!
Allow me to conclude this course with painful yet sincere confessions of two renowned scholars whose contribution to humanity and servitude to Islam is beyond doubt.
1. Mulla Sadra (died in 1050 A.H); the leading figure in Islamic philosophy for the last four centuries, in the introduction of his Tafsir of Surah al-Waqe'a (ch.56) states:
"*…I spent a great deal of my life studying the works of the philosophers until I assumed I am somebody! However, when my insight was opened I found myself empty from real knowledge. At the end of my life, I began reflecting on the Quran and the Hadith of Muhammad and his pure progeny (p). I then became certain that all my previous works have been baseless. For in my entire life I was standing under the shade instead of light. The agony of this realisation burnt my heart and inflamed my soul, until the Divine Mercy took my hand and introduced me to the secrets of the Quran. I began the interpretation of the Quran and reflecting on its Ayaat. I saw the angels telling me: "**Salamun Alaykum! You have done well, so enter here to abide therein forever."** [39:7]*
I have now attended writing the secrets of the Quran, yet I confess that the Quran is a profound ocean that unless by the Grace of the Almighty it is not possible to enter it. Alas! My life is finished, my body is unable, my heart is broken, my capital (life) is so little, my tools are incomplete and my soul is small."

2. Imam Khomeini (died in 1989)
Indisputably, Imam Khomeini (may God elevate his status in Paradise) was the reviver of Islam in our modern time. Millions of people across the globe including the author of these words are indebted to him for their guidance. Nonetheless, in the last few years of his life in his address to the youth stated:
"*I hereby sincerely, not for formality, announce that I regret my passed life. You the prolific Muslim youth! Direct the Islamic seminaries and the universities to the various aspects of the Noble Quran. Teaching the Quran shall be the priority*

[10] Ibid, vol.90 p.223

in every field. Let it not be –may God forbid- when the aging and weakness attack, you, like this author, regret your lost youth."[11]

And our last call is
All praise belongs to the Lord of the Worlds.

[11] Sahife Noor, vol.20, p.20

Grade 12

Stream 2

Lesson Sequence: 25-32

Advanced Lessons in Sciences of Hadith

We estimate this unit can be taught over 8 lessons.

In the Name of the Almighty

Semester 4
Course name: Sciences of the Hadith ('Uloomul-Hadith)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 25-26: Introduction

Meeting 1: Definition, Significance, Branches

Abstract:

Definition

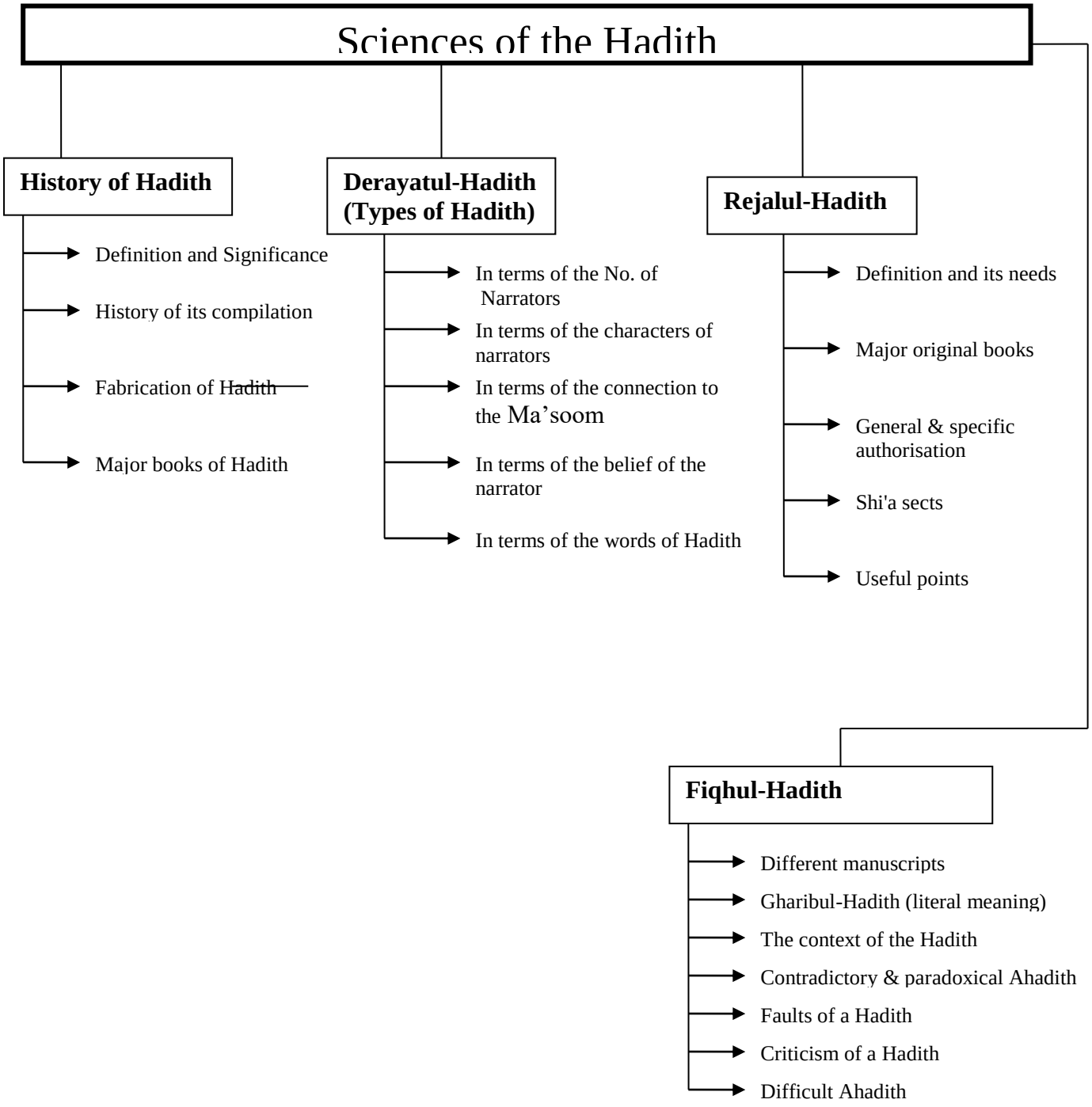
'Hadith' literally means a new word or thing, the antonym of which is 'Qadim' meaning 'old'. The plural form of Hadith is 'Ahadith'. Thus, the Holy Quran in this sense is a 'Hadith', nay 'the best Hadith'. The Almighty Allah has referred to the Quran in several Ayaat as 'Hadith'. [For instance see: 52:34, 53:59, 39:23]

'Hadith' in the expression of Muslims as well as in this study is the quotation of the saying, the action or the confirmation of the Prophet of Islam (P). The Shi'a extend the meaning of the 'Hadith' to include that of Fatima al-Zahra (s.a) and the 12 Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s). Their sayings also include their verbal or written words. It also includes all their words whether their addressees are people or God such as their supplications.
The Sunnis usually extend the meaning of the Hadith to include the sayings of the Companions of the Prophet (P) as well as the Companions of the Companions (Taabe'een).
Hadith is sometimes called 'Rewayah' (quoted), 'Khabar' (news), 'Sunna' (tradition and the way of life) and 'Athar' (report). Hadith is usually translated in English into 'narration'.

Hadith and Hadith Qodsi

Hadith is different from the Hadith Qodsi (Holy saying) in that Hadith is the saying of the Ma'soom that he by divine inspiration or revelation utters in explanation of the religious matters. Hadith Qodsi is the Words of God that a Prophet quotes from the Almighty Allah. Hadith Qodsi is free from the challenge of miracle and it is not part of the Quran. The examples of Hadith Qodsi are quotation of Prophet David (a.s), Prophet Moses (a.s) and Prophet Muhammad (P) from God. For instance, the Prophet of Islam (P) said: "The Almighty Allah says: Fasting is mine and I reward it (or I am the reward of it)."[1]

[1] Al-Majlesi; Beharul-anwaar, vol.96,p.252


Sciences of the Hadith
History of Hadith
Definition and Significance
History of its compilation
Fabrication of Hadith
Major books of Hadith
Derayatul-Hadith (Types of Hadith)
In terms of the No. of Narrators
In terms of the characters of narrators
In terms of the connection to the Ma'soom
In terms of the belief of the narrator
In terms of the words of Hadith
Rejalul-Hadith
Definition and its needs
Major original books
General & specific authorisation
Shi'a sects
Useful points
Fiqhul-Hadith
Different manuscripts
Gharibul-Hadith (literal meaning)
The context of the Hadith
Contradictory & paradoxical Ahadith
Faults of a Hadith
Criticism of a Hadith
Difficult Ahadith

Proofs for the Significance of Hadith in Islam

1. **Rational proof**

The holy Quran is the first and the most important source of knowledge in Islam. Nonetheless, the holy Quran includes only the general principles of the prosperity of man in here and in the hereafter. It is for this reason that Muslim scholars whether Shia or Sunni asserted that the complete denial of the Hadith and the claim of 'the Book of Allah suffices us' will lead to nothing other than distortion of Islam and denial of the necessary aspects of Islam. Therefore, to understand the major portions of Islam one has no choice but to be well acquainted with the Sunna of the Prophet (P) and the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s).

2. **Quranic Proofs**

To practice and adhere to the Quran necessitates referring to the Hadith. The Almighty God in various Ayaat has referred the Muslims to the Sunna of the Prophet (p). The following Ayaat are some examples in which the explanations of the details of the religion is left to the Prophet of Islam (p):

a. ***"Whatsoever the Messenger gives you take it and whatsoever he forbids you abstain (from it)."*** 59:7

b. ***"Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is only a revelation revealed."*** 53:3-4

c. ***"And We have sent down unto you that you may explain clearly to them what is sent down to them and that they may give thought."*** 16:44

d. "**Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow**." 33:21

e. "**Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and obey those of you who are in authority (the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt).**" 4:59

f. "**Allah wishes only to remove all evil deeds from you O Family of the Prophet and to purify you with a thorough purification**." 33:33

3. **Prophetic Recommendations for Protection and Memorization of the Hadith**: The followings are some examples:

a. **Recommendations for Narrations of Hadith**: "**Know the status of people to us according to their narrations from us**." Narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s).[2]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) narrated from his father (Imam Baqir a.s), ***"My dear son. Know the status of the Shi'a according to their narrations and knowledge. For surely the knowledge is understanding of the Hadith and by understanding the Hadith a believer will be elevated to the highest level of faith."***[3]

The Prophet of Islam (p) on the day of Mina said, ***"May Allah bloom the face of a slave of God who hears my words and understands them and pass it those who did not hear it. So, how many people who transfer knowledge without understating it, and how many people who transfer knowledge to the one who is more learned than them."***[4]

Muawieh Bin Ammar said to Imam Sadiq (a.s), *"There is a person who narrates so many Hadith from you and spreads it among people. He makes the hearts of your followers strong. On the other hand, there is another worshipping person who is also one of your followers but does not narrate that many Hadith from you. Which one is more virtuous? The Imam replied,* ***"The one who narrates many of our***

[2] Al-Majlesi, Beharul-Anwaar, vol.2, p.150
[3] Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p.184
[4] Ibid

Ahadith and distributes them among people and strengthens the hearts of our followers is more virtuous than one thousand worshippers."[5]

b. **Recommendations for the writing of the Hadith**: The Prophet of Islam (p) said, *"Whoever writes from me a knowledge or a Hadith so far as that knowledge or Hadith remains a reward will be written for him."*[6]

A man from Ansar (the habitants of Madina who helped the Migrants) used to attend the sessions of the Prophet (p), listen to his sermons in awe, yet he could never remember the sermons of the Prophet (p) after he left. When he complained to the Prophet (p) the Prophet (p) said pointing to the man's hand, *"Seek the help of your hand i.e. write my words down."*[7]

c. **Recommendations for the Memorization of Forty Hadith**: Imam Kadhem (p) quoted from the Prophet of Islam (p): *"Whoever Muslim memorizes forty Hadith that Muslims need in the matter of the religion on the day of Judgement the Almighty God will raise him as a learned scholar."*[8]

The Prophet of Islam (p) in his recommendations to Imam Ali (p) said, *"O Ali! Whoever from my Ummah memorizes forty Hadith seeking by that the pleasure of the Almighty God and the Hereafter, the Almighty God will associate him on the Day of Judgement with the Prophets and the truthful and the witnesses and the righteous people, and how good associates are they."*[9]

Such Ahadith have been the motivation of tens of scholars throughout history to compile books named al-Arbaeen (Forty Hadith) such as the Arbaeen of the Late Sheikh Bahaei and the Arbaeen of the Late Imam Khomeini.

d. **The tradition of the earlier learned Muslims**: Jabbir Bin Abdullah al-Ansari heard that Abdullah Bin Anis has heard a Hadith from the Prophet (p) concerning being unfair to people, the Hadith that Jabbir had no knowledge of. He purchased a camel and travelled for a month to find Abdullah in Damascus only to hear the Hadith directly from Adbullah and return home! It is narrated from Abu Qolabeh Basri (died in 104 AH) that he resided in Madina for three years to hear a Hadith from the main narrator of it.[10]

As important as the Hadith is, unfortunately it has not always been preserved in its immaculate origin. Thus, it has also become the source of all sectarianism and divisions in Islam. This is a very controversial topic with which we shall deal in the next lesson.

[5] Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p.145
[6] Al-Hendi, Kanzul-Ommal
[7] Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p.152
[8] Al-Majlesi, Beharul-anwaar, vol.2, p.153
[9] Ibid
[10] Sobhi Saleh, Uloomul-Hadith, p.47

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Hadith ('Uloomul-Hadith)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 27-28:The Tragedy of Hadith Prohibition; Roots and Reasons

Abstract

Some Examples of Hadith Prohibition:

1. Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Muslim, al-Darami (the teacher of Bukhari), al-Termethi and Nasaei narrated in their Isnad from Abu-Sa'eid al-Khodri: The Prophet (P) said: *"Do not quote me in other than the Quran. So, whoever has written anything from me other than the Quran, shall erase it."*
2. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrated from Zaid Ibn Thabet: "The Messenger of Allah (P) prohibited us from writing anything from him and he erased them."
3. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrated from Abu-Horayra: "We were sitting writing what we had heard from the Prophet (P), when the Prophet (P) arrived. He asked what we were writing. We said: What we have heard from you. He said: Are you (compiling) a book besides the Book of Allah? We said: (we write) what we hear from you. He said: "Write the Book of Allah. Write only the Book of Allah. Are you writing other than the Book of Allah? Write only the Book of Allah." Abu-Horayra said: Following the instruction of the Prophet (P) we collected our writings and burnt them in a fire."

As we shall explain in this lesson 'the Ahadith of Prohibition' are undoubtedly either fabricated to justify the mistakes of the Caliphs or they were special instruction for specific people such as Abu-Horayra. Remarkably, although-according to Abu-Horayra- the Prophet (P) had prohibited him to write any Hadith, the Sunni books of Hadith is largely filled with his narrations. In fact, in the Sunni books of Hadith no one has narrated from the Prophet (P) more than Abu-Horayra!

Stages of Prohibition of Hadith

1. During the Time of the Prophet (P)

Al-Darami in the introduction of his 'Sunan' and al-Hakem in his 'al-Mostadrak' narrated from Abdullah the son of Amr Ibn 'As: I used to write whatever I heard from the Messenger of Allah (P) until the Qoraysh prohibited me and said to me: Do you write anything you hear from the Prophet (P) whilst he is also a human who has rage and pleasure? I then stopped writing the Hadith until I informed the Prophet (P) about what the Qoraysh had told me. He pointed to his mouth with his finger and said: "Write. By the One my life is in His Mighty Hand, none other than truth has come out of this."

2. In the last days of the life of the Prophet (P)

"Ibn Abbas said: when the Prophet (P) was at his dying bed there where some men around him, among them, Omar Ibn Khattab. The Messenger of Allah (P) said to them: Bring me a book to write something for you that you may never go astray. Omar said: Surely the pain has inflicted the Messenger of Allah and the Book of Allah is with you. The Book of Allah suffices us! Following his (Omar) words those who were at the house disputed amongst themselves. Some agreed with Omar and when the dispute and voices rose the Messenger of Allah (P) said: Stand up and leave me for it is not appropriate to dispute at the presence of a Prophet (P)."

3. During the reign of Abu-Bakr

Al-Thahabi under the biography of Abu-Bakr narrated: "After the demise of the Prophet (P) Abu-Bakr called people and said: You have been narrating many Ahadith from the Prophet (P) yet you dispute among yourselves about them. People who come after you will dispute more about them. Thus, from now do not narrate any more Hadith from the Prophet (P). Whoever asked you anything tell them: Between us and you is the Book of Allah, thus accept its Halal as Halal and accept its Haraam as Haraam."

Al-Thahabi also narrated the following event from Aiysha; the daughter of Abu-Bakr:

"My father has compiled 500 Hadith from the Prophet (P). One night (during his caliphate) he was uneasy and did not sleep the whole night. In the morning he called me and said: My daughter bring me those Ahadith that I have with you. I brought them to him and he burnt them all. He then said: I am worried lest I die and there has been any Hadith that I have narrated it from the Prophet (P) through a person that I assumed him to be honest and trustworthy whereas he is not. I do not wish to carry the responsibility of a wrong narration on my neck!"

4. During the reign of Omar

Ibn Sa'd narrated from Orwa: Omar decided to write down the Ahadith of the Prophet (P). He sought the opinion of the Companions about the matter to which they positively consented. Nonetheless, Omar thought about it over for a month and then announced: I had in mind to write down the Ahadith of the Prophet (P). Yet, I remembered the nations who were before you; those who wrote their books and abandoned the Book of Allah. By Allah! I will never mix the Book of Allah with anything else." Ibn Sa'd continued: "Omar took an oath from people to bring all the books of Hadith that they had compiled. When the Companions brought their books he set them all on fire."

5. During the reign of Othman

Othman sent Abu-Thar on exile to Damascus for the so-called crime of narrating the Prophetic Hadith. Subsequently, Mo'awiyah; the then ruler of Damascus, boycotted Abu-Thar and did not allow anyone to communicate with him. Eventually Abu-Thar the distinguished companion of the Prophet (P) died lonely in the wilderness of Rabatha.

6. During the reign of Mo'awiyah

"Mo'awiyah wrote an official letter with the same content to all his delegates announcing that whoever narrates anything in virtue of Abu-Torab (Imam Ali) or his family, he is not under the protection of the government." Ibn Abil-Hadid furthered that during that time the people of Kufa suffered the most.

Analysis of the Motivations Behind the Prohibition of Hadith

1. The best evidence of this claim is that many Companions including Abu-Bakr had books of Hadith. Is it possible that the Prophet of Islam (P) has forbidden something yet many Companions disobey him and do otherwise?! The narrations concerning prohibition of Hadith indicate to us that the Companions in general were into the good tradition of collecting the Ahadith of the Prophet (P). It was due to this tradition that when Omar sought their opinion about compiling the Hadith they all consented.
2. If they were truly concerned about the forged Hadith would it not be more reasonable to form a committee of Hadith investigation and then compile the Ahadith that there was enough trustworthy testimonies on them? Moreover, Abu-Bakr had accompanied the Prophet (P) for many years, could he then not at least keep the Ahadith that he had heard directly from the Prophet (P)? Why did he have to burn all of them?! Is it possible that he meant to hide something from the next generations lest they used it against him?

Abu-Bakr asserted that he was concerned about the further future disputes amongst the Muslims and hence decided to uproot the problem by eradicating the Prophetic Hadith! Today and for many centuries Muslims suffer various sectarianism primarily due to the fact that the collection of the Prophetic Hadith was prohibited over the first century of the advent of Islam.

3. In our opinion, the main root for prohibition of the Hadith must be sought in the critical issue of the caliphate after the Prophet (P). The following are some proofs for this opinion:

3/1: As mentioned earlier it was Qoraysh-not the Prophet (P)- who forbade Abdullah son of 'Amr Ibn 'As to narrate the Prophetic Hadith. The reason mentioned in the narration is interesting: "The Prophet (P) is only a human and has rage and pleasure." This expression is used only when the speaker has spoken about the virtues or vices of someone else. Surely, the Prophet of Islam (P) did not speak in favour of the Qoraysh or else they would never abandon Abdullah from narrating it. Thus, it seems more likely that Abdullah had collected some Ahadith that could be used against the party of Qoraysh.

3/2: Omar had ordered the Companions of the Prophet (P) to lessen the narrations from the Prophet (P) except if it was about the practical laws of Islam. This again indicates that the main concern of Omar was about the Ahadith that dealt with the virtues of his opponent, i.e. Imam Ali (a.s). This claim can be proven by studying the trend of the Hadith prohibition at the time of Mo'awiyah who –unlike Omar- explicitly abandoned any narration concerning the virtues of Imam Ali (a.s).

3/3: The fabricators of the law of Hadith Prohibition did not apply it to their sincere and loyal friends, nor would it apply to themselves. Among those selected people on whom the law of Hadith prohibition did not apply was the mother of the believers; Aiysha the loyal daughter of Abu Bakr. During the reigns of Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman she was the official spokeswoman of the government. Similarly, Omar freely fabricated some narrations concerning himself such as "The Agreements" (al Mowafiqaat).

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Hadith ('Uloomul-Hadith)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 29-30: The Evil Consequences of the Hadith Prohibition

Abstract

1. Narration not quotation

The following are some examples of the defects of not narrating the actual words of the Prophet (P):

a. Asr Prayer or Zohr Prayer:

Bukhari in his Sahih narrated from Ibn Omar saying: "The Messenger of Allah (P) said on the Day of Ahzab: None shall offer their Asr prayers but at Bani-Qorayzah."

Muslim in his Sahih narrating from the same narrator said: "The Messenger of Allah (P) said on the Day of Ahzab: None shall offer their Zohr prayers but at Bani-Qorayzah."

Ibn Hajar; the best interpreter of Sahih Bukhari (died in 852 A.H) under the interpretation of the above Hadith said: "In all versions of Bukhari *'Asr prayers'* is written, whereas in all versions of Muslim 'Zohr prayers' is written. This is despite the fact that both of them narrated from the same source and through the same chain of narrators!" He then in justification of the difference asserted: "Bukhari used to write down the Ahadith from his memory and was not committed to a verbal narration."

b. Different Formula of The Testimony

Sadly, the Sunni scholars today are left with nine different versions of the formula for Tashahud (testimony) in their daily prayers. They narrate different formulas from different companions. For instance, the narration of Ibn Mas'oud is different from the narration of Ibn Abbas and they are different from the narration of Omar Ibn Khattab. All three are different from the narration of Abu-Sa'ed al-Khodri all of which are different from the narration of Ayesha, etc.

Today the Tashahud of the Hanafi and Hanbali based on a narration from Ibn Mas'oud is as follows:

التحيات لله و الصلوات و الطيبات. السلام عليک ايها النبی و رحمة الله و برکاته. السلام علينا و علی عباد الله الصالحين. اشـهد ان لا الـه الا الله و اشـهد ان محمدا عبده و رسوله.

The Malikis Tashahud however, following a narration from Omar Ibn Khattab is as follows:

التحيات الزاکيات لله الطيبات الصلوات لله.

Imam Malik preferred this narration, for Omar had recited it publically on the pulpit and no one objected!

The Shafe'is on the other hand, relying on a narration from Ibn Abbas say in their Tashahud:

التحيات المبارکات الصلوات الطيبات لله. السلام عليک ايها النبی و رحمة الله و برکاته. السلام علينا و علی عباد الله الصالحين. اشهد ان محمدا رسول الله.

Problems of Narrations

The most important problem of narration -not quotation- is that very often it may lead to a different meaning and results in distortion of the religion. Sometimes, the narrators cannot remember the context of the Hadith or cannot remember the actual wordings etc. Thus, they fail to narrate the concept of the Hadith accurately. Consider the following examples:

a. Abu-Horayrah narrated from the Prophet (P): "If there is any evil it is in three things: the house, the woman and the horse!"

The problem of this narration is that firstly it contradicts the numerous prophetic narrations in which the Messenger of Allah (P) prohibited pessimism. Secondly, when Ayesha was informed about this narration she commented: what the Prophet had said was: "The People of Jahilliyah used to say if there is any evil it is in three things…" But Abu-Horayrah was not there to hear the first part of the Hadith.
b. Bukhari in his Isnad narrated from Ayesha who asked the Prophet (P) concerning the plague: He said, "That was a means of torture which God used to send upon whom-so-ever he wished, but he made it a source of mercy for the believers, for anyone who is residing in a town in which this disease is present, and remains there and does not leave that town, but has patience and hopes for God's reward, and knows that nothing will befall him except what God has written for him, then he will get such reward as that of a martyr."[1]
The determinists Ash'aries have referred to this narration to prove their dogma of determinism. With the spread of such narrations the followers of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) refer to their Imams (a.s) to clarify their accuracy. Al-Kolayni in an authentic Hadith from al-Halabi narrated: He asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) if it was permissible for the people of a town afflicted by plague to travel from one suburb to another or from that town to another? The Imam (a.s) replied: "It doesn't matter! Verily, the Messenger of Allah (P) prohibited that for his advanced guards who were in war with the enemies and were afflicted by the plague. They fled from the plague. Then the Messenger of Allah (P) said: Whoever flees from it (plague) is like the one fleeing from war. He said so (only) to discourage his army from vacating their bases."[2]

2. Fabrication of Hadith

It is narrated from the Prophet (P): "Whoever misquotes me deliberately his seat shall be placed in Fire."
Many Shi'a and Sunni narrators have narrated the above Hadith. Ibn Jouzi claims that the Hadith is narrated through more than one hundred companions of the Prophet (P). Some scholars such as Bukhari and Nasaei have even narrated it without the term 'deliberate'. According to them whoever misquotes the Prophet (P) whether deliberately or not will be placed in Paradise.[3]

The late Allama' Amini mentioned the names of forty three narrators who had fabricated 408686 Hadith some of whom had fabricated up to one hundred thousand Hadith. His eminence further says: "The fact the Abu Dawood narrated only 4800 Hadith from five hundred thousand Hadith available to him, Bukhari narrated only 2761 Hadith from among six hundred thousand Hadith, Muslim narrated only 4000 Hadith from among three hundred thousand Hadith, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrated 30,000 Hadith from seven hundred and fifty thousand Hadith and Ahmad Ibn Forat narrated only 300,000 from among one million and five hundred thousand Hadith one can tell how actively the fabricators were working in that time."[4]
Allama' Askari in his book "one hundred and fifty forged companions" proved hundreds of names, places, wars, poems and narrations that Sayf Ibn Omar had fabricated which they have no real existence at all!

The Most Famous Fabricators

1. Mo'awiyah

Ibn Abil-Hadid quoting from Abu Abdillah Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad known as Naftoya; the historian of the fourth century said: "Most of the fabricated narrations in virtues of the companions were forged during the reign of Mo'awiyah."[5] The following are some examples of those fabrications:

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[1] Al-Bukhari, al-Sahih
[2] Al-Kolayni, al-Kaafi 8:108
[3] Note that the different wordings in this Hadith are another example of narration not quotation.
[4] Al-Ghadir 5:291
[5] Sharhe Nahjul-Balagha 3:15

a. In a very famous Hadith it is narrated from the Prophet (P): "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the gate of it. Whoever intends to access the city shall enter through the gate."[6]
The agents of Mo'awiyah manipulated the above Hadith in the following forms:
"I am the city of knowledge and Abu Bakr is its base, and Omar is its walls, and Othman is its ceiling and Ali is its gate."[7]
The fabrication of this narration is so obvious. May be the cities of Mo'awiyah had ceilings!

b. It is also narrated from the Prophet (P): "Hasan and Husain are the masters of the youth of Paradise."
In order to dismantle the heavenly status of Hasanayn (a.s), the agents of Mo'awiyah fabricated the following Hadith claiming that Imam Ali (a.s) has narrated it from the Prophet (P): "Abu Bakr and Omar are the masters of the aged people of Paradise from the beginning to the end save the Prophets and the Messengers."[8]
It is so obvious that the people of Paradise are all young. There is no room for the masters, for the aged, for there is no aged person in Paradise.

c. Mo'awiyah offered one hundred thousand Dirhams to Samorah Ibn Jondab to claim the Ayah "of the people…" (2:204) is revealed concerning Ali Ibn Abi Talib! Samorah refused until Mo'awiyah increased the amount to four hundred thousand Dirhams and Samorah accepted the deal![9]

2. Abu Horayrah

To demonstrate the amount of the fabricated Hadith produced by him it is sufficient to have a comparison between the numbers of the Ahadith found in the Sunni books of Hadith from Imam Ali (a.s) and that of Abu Horayrah.

Imam Ali (a.s) was brought up in the house of the Prophet (P) from the age of two, and he was the first person who declared his testimony after its advent. All Muslims are unanimous that none of the companions of the Prophet (P) were so virtuous as that of Imam Ali (a.s). Nonetheless, according to Soyouti only **58** Ahadith are narrated from Imam Ali (as.) and that is mainly on trivial issues. Ibn Jazm further confirmed that only 50 Ahadith of what is narrated from Imam Ali (a.s) is authentic (to their standard). Bukhari and Muslim together have only narrated about 20 Ahadith from Imam Ali (a.s). Interestingly, very often the Sunni narrators fabricated a Hadith against the teachings of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) relating it to Imam Ali (a.s) to use it against their followers. Examples of these Ahadith are what they have misquoted from the Imam concerning the permissibility of wiping on the shoes (for Wudu)[10] or prohibition of temporary Marriage.
On the other hand, from Abu Horayrah who had only met the Prophet (P) for less than two years, they have narrated **5374** Hadith! Thus, Abu Horayrah in the Sunni books of Hadith is **the most** narrating narrator.

When Mo'awiyah rebelled against the legal government of Imam Ali (a.s), Abu Horayrah; who could not satisfy his stomach under the just leadership of the Imam, joined the camp of Mo'awiyah. Mo'awiyah provided him with a palace made of agate stones in addition to a piece of land. He also married him to Bosrah; the daughter of Ghazwan. In return he asked Abu Horayrah to fight Ali (a.s) with his tongue (not his sword). Mo'awiyah asked Abu Horayrah to fabricate Ahadith in virtues of Mo'awiyah and the first caliphs. The following are some examples of those fabrications:

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[6] For the references of this Hadith please see:
[7] Al-Sawaequl-Mohreqah, p.34
[8] Ibn Majah 1:36 Hadith No. 95
[9] Ibn Abil-Hadid, Sharhe Nahjul Balagha 1:358
[10] Muslim 1:232

a. Ibn Asakir and al-Khatib narrated from Abu Horayrah: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (P) saying: Verily, Allah trusted three people for His revelation; myself (the Prophet), Gabriel and Mo'awiyah!"[11]
b. Bazzaz narrated from Abu Horayrah from the Messenger of Allah: "Verily the sun and the moon are two bulls in Fire on the Day of Judgment." Hasan said to Abu Horayrah: What is the sin of those two (to suffer in Hell)? Abu Horayrah said: I narrate from the Prophet (P) and yet you ask me why?![12]
c. The following is the strangest narration one could ever imagine. Bukhari narrated a Hadith from Abu Horayrah. After he narrated the Hadith to people, they asked him: O Abu Horayrah did you hear this from the Prophet (P)? Abu Horayrah who was confident about the naivety of his audience said: No, this is from the pocket of Abu Horayrah![13]

For further information about Abu Horayrah and his mischief in Islam please study the two following scholarly works:
1) Abu Horayrah written by the late Allama Sharafu-Ddin al-Ameli
2) Sheikh al-Modhayrah written by the late Abu Rayyah

3. Ka'bul-Ahbar and other Jewish and Christian monks

During the reign of Mo'awiyah some Jewish rabbis and Christian monks who had converted for their hidden agenda were employed by Mo'awiyah. Ka'Bul-Ahbar, Tamim al-Dari, Wahab Ibn Monabbah, Abdullah Ibn Salam and Sayf Ibn Omar were the main figures in this category. They imported numerous distorted biblical myths into the Islamic traditions thus causing distortion in many stories of the Quran. The scholars of Hadith refer to these narrations as 'Israelites'. Very often these narrations are expressed to the public by Abu Horayrah who studied under Ka'bul-Ahbar.

4. Ibn Abil-Ouja and other atheists

The fourth group of people who deliberately and with evil intention fabricated Hadith were the atheists such as Ibn Abil-Ouja. Ibn Athir in his book of history under the events of the year 155 A.H. narrated: When Ibn Abil-Ouja was taken to the cross for execution he said: you are killing me whilst I have entered 4000 Hadith in your books by which I have shown many Halal things as Haraam and many Haraam things as Halal. I have shown the days that you are supposed to fast as feasting days and the feasting days as fasting days!"[14]

Motivations Behind Fabrications

1. To support a particular school

For instance, the followers of Imam Shafe'i fabricated a Hadith relating it to Abu Horayrah claiming that the Prophet (P) said:

يكون فى امتى رجل يقال له محمد بن ادريس اضر من ابليس و يكون فى امتى رجل يقال له ابوحنيفه هو سراج امتى.

"There shall be a man in my Ummah who will be called Muhammad ibn Idris, he is worse than Iblis. And there shall be a man in my Ummah who will be called Abu-Hanifa, he is the lantern of my Ummah!"[15]

2. To Support a particular political ruler

For instance Abu-Horayrah fabricated the following narration:

ان الله ائتمن على وحيه ثلاثة: انا و على و معاوية.

"Allah concerning His revelation trusted three: I (the Prophet (P)), Gabriel and Mo'awiyah!"[16]

[11] Ibn Kathir, Al-Bedayah and Al-Nihaya 8:120
[12] Abu Rayyah; Adhwaun Ala-Sunnatil-Muhammadiyah, p.207
[13] Bukhari, Sahih 6:190, the Book of Nafaqat, ch. 1
[14] Al-Kaamil 6:7
[15] Adhwa' al-Sunnatil-Muhammadiyah, p.121
[16] Ibid p.125

3. To Distort Islam

For instance, the Christians fabricated a Hadith in which Jesus is shown as the only infallible person who is free from the original sin! Bukhari narrated from Abu Horayrah:

كل ابن آدم يطعن الشيطان فى جنبه حين يولد غير عيسى بن مريم ذهب يطعن فطعن فى الحجاب

"Satan hits the side of all the children of Adam at birth save Jesus son of Mary. He went to hit him too but he hit a veil."[17]

[17]

In the Name of the Almighty

Course name: Sciences of the Hadith ('Uloomul-Hadith)
Lecturer: Sh. Mansour Leghaei
Lesson 31-32 The History of Hadith amongst the Shi'a

Abstract

Some examples of the Shi'a resistance against the law of Hadith prohibition:

1. Abu-thar al-Ghefari

Abu-thar during the reign of Omar and Othman made a pilgrimage to Hajj. He was sitting nearby the Middle Stone (Jamaratul-Wosta resembling Satan and whereat pilgrims throw stones) at Mena. The pilgrims who knew him and his status had circled around him asking their religious questions. All of the sudden one of the agents of the government abruptly stood above his head saying: "Were you not forbidden from giving any verdict?"

Abu-thar looked up at him and said: "Are you appointed to watch me? If you put your sword here (pointing at the back of his neck) to behead me, because I am narrating a Hadith, while you would sever me head if I can narrate another Hadith from the Prophet (P) I would certainly do so."[1]

2. Roshayd al-Hajari

After his execution and before his martyrdom Roshayd cried out to his relatives: "Stop crying! Rather bring a pen and a piece of paper to narrate to you what I have learned from my mentor; Imam Ali (a.s)."[2]

3. Maytham al-Tammar

Ibn Ziad had put Maytham on the cross to die. From the top of the cross he said: "O people! Whoever wishes to hear the secrete knowledge from Ali Ibn Abi Taleb (should listen to me)." Consequently Ibn Ziad had his tongue pulled out from his throat.[3]

The First and the Most Complete book of Hadith in Islam

The Late Kolayni is his Isnad from Sulaim ibn Qais al Hilali narrated the Hadith concerning the compilation of that book. Due to the significance of the Hadith I shall quote the full Hadith.

Sulaim said, "I said to Imam Ali I heard some Prophetic Hadith from Salman, Abu thar and Meqdad concerning the interpretation of the Quran that are different from what people narrate. I also hear from you that you confirm their narration and you believe that the narrations of people are incorrect. Do you believe that people intentionally related lies to the Prophet and have interpreted the Quran based on their self assumptions? Imam Ali approached me and said, 'You asked the question so make sure you understand the answer. Indeed what people have access to include right and wrong, truth and lies, abrogating and abrogated, general and specific, established and ambiguous and what is heard and what is assumed. Even in the lifetime of the holy Prophet, people did attribute false statements to him so such an extent that he himself stood up and addressed the people, 'O people, those who attribute false statements to me secures his abode in hell.' Then the people went on attributing false statements to him after his death. Whatever traditions you (people) have received are from four categories (of narrators). There is no fifth category.

The first is a hypocrite who poses himself as a believer and actually is a shame Muslim. Attributing false statements to the Prophet intentionally, is not considered by him as a sin, nor does he mind such an attribution. Were the people even to know how false and hypocritical he is, they would never accept a word from him, nor would they confirm his statements. It was this type of man about whom people started saying, 'This is the one who had been honoured by the company of the Prophet and who has actually seen and heard the Prophet.' People accepted traditions from him without knowing his credentials. Allah the Almighty has told His Prophet about the hypocrites all that was to be told and has detailed all the characteristics that were to be detailed.

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[1] Sonan al-Darami 1:136, al-Tabaqatul-Kobra 2:354, Bukhari; al-Sahih 1:161 (in brief).

[2] Al-Majlesi; Beharul-Anwaar 42:121

[3] Ibid 42:133

Allah the Almighty has said so, 'When you see them, you marvel at their personalities; and if they speak, you listen unto their speech.' (al-Munafiqun 63:4)
'Such people remained there after the Prophet as well. Then they got near the leaders (rulers) who misguided and invited people towards the hell fire through the means of their fabrications, falsehood and slander. They were entrusted with big jobs by the rulers of the time and were thus foisted on the people, and their rulers exploited the situation through them. Except the few whom Allah saved, the common people were always with their rulers and with their mundane business of the world. All this is the description of the one out of all categories.
(The second is the category of a person) who has actually heard something from the Prophet but was not able to retain it in his mind and fell into doubt. He never intentionally told a lie, but he started speaking, practicing and propagating what he remembered incorrectly and sketchily, and at the same time claimed that 'I have heard the Prophet say so.' If the Muslim community had known that he was in error, they would never have accepted his words. And if the man himself had known that he was mistaken, he would have himself rejected his own version.
The third category is of the person who has heard the Prophet ordering something to be done, but the Prophet later on forbade the same. The man knows the former but is unaware of the latter. Or the man has heard the Prophet forbidding something but afterwards the Prophet has made it permissible. The man knows the former, but does not know the latter. Thus the man was in the know of the abrogated (as-Sunnah), but was not aware of its abrogative. If he had been aware that it has been abrogated he himself would have withdrawn his own narrated tradition. If the Muslims had been in the know that the Prophet had cancelled what the man had related (in the authority of the Prophet) they would have themselves rejected his version.
The fourth and the last is the category of the person who had never attributed false statements to the Prophet and who hated false statements because of his fear of Allah and reverence for the Prophet. He never forgets anything from what he had heard from the Prophet. He always relates exactly what he had heard from the Prophet without adding anything to or subtracting anything from it. He is in the know of both what supersedes and also what has been superseded. Hence he acts according to what supersedes, leaving aside the superseded. Verily, the commands of the Prophet are also like the verses of he quran which consist of the superseded and the superseding (general and the specific) precise (muhkam) and the ambiguous and multi meaning (mutashabih). Like the quran, the Prophet's wordings also had two aspects, that is, the general and the specific. As Almighty Allah Himself has said, "And whatever the Apostle gives you, you accept it, and from whatever he prevents, you be away (from it).' (al-Hashr 59:7) Thus the one who was not aware of all these (complications) would fall in doubt and would not understand what Allah and His messenger exactly meant. It was not at all a fact that all the companions of the prophet had the ability of either asking the Prophet a question or of understanding his answers. There were some who used t put question to the Prophet but could not understand his answer. There were also others who did ask the Holy Prophet a question but did not understand his answer until they did like some Bedouins or a wayfarer to come and ask the Prophet some questions so that they could have a chance to be enlightened by the Prophet's answer.
Verily, I was the person who had admittance to the Prophet (at least) once every day and once every night when I used to be alone with him. On such occasions, I had the honour to talk with him on whichever subject he was inclined. The companions of the Prophet were in the know that to no other person did the Prophet extend such a privilege (of proximity) as he did to me. Many a time, I had been at my house and the prophet used to come to see me and this was his usual practice. When I was to enter any of his (Prophet's) room to see him he used to vacate the room for the sake of privacy with me. In vacating the room, even his wives were not spared and there would be none with him besides myself. But when the Prophet had his turn to visit my house for private conference, he would not exclude Fatima (my wife) and any of my sons (p.b.u.t) from his conference. On such occasions, he would reply to my queries and when I had exhausted my queries and remained silent, he would himself initiate further discussions. Never was there any case of revelation of any of the verse of the Quran, which the Prophet did not recite and dictate to me and which I did not write down in my own hand. Further, never was there any revelation of which the Prophet has apprised me with the basic import, its complete elucidations, with the verses that were abrogative and with the verses that were abrogated, with the verses clear and the ambiguous and also with the verses general and specific.
And then the Prophet prayed to Allah to bestow upon me its true understanding and its unfailing memory. Ever since the Prophet had prayed for me, I never forgot a single verse from the Gook of

Allah, nor did I forget the knowledge which the Prophet had imparted to me and which I had taken down in my own hand. Nothing from what was revealed to the Prophet, the lawful and the unlawful; nothing from the divine imperatives and the prohibitions, nothing from what had been and what would be, and nothing from the books revealed previously to any of the Prophets regarding divine obedience and disobedience did the Prophet spare teaching me. I had fully grasped it and forgot not a word from it. Then the Prophet put his hand over my chest and prayed to Allah to fill my heart with knowledge and understanding, wisdom and enlightenment. I, then, inquired: "O Prophet of Allah, may my parents be sacrificed for you! I have never forgotten anything ever since you have prayed for me. Nor did I forget what I had not noted down. After all this, are you still afraid of my being forgetful?' Hearing this, the Prophet replied, 'No, I am never afraid of your being either forgetful or ignorant.'"[4]

The Book of Al-Jame'a in the Hands of the Imams

The Late al-Kolayni in his Isnad from Aban narrated "A man asked Imam Sajjad concerning the meaning of 'thing' as someone has written in his will that something from his wealth should be given to someone. The Imam replied, 'Thing' in the book of Ali (i.e. al-Jame'a) means 1/6th of the wealth."[5]

Najashi; the eminent Shi'a expert in biography of narrators (died in 450 A.H), quoted from Muhammad Ibn Azafer al-Sayrafi: Hakam Ibn Oyaynah (one of the Zaidis) and I visited Imam Baqir (a.s). Hakam was asking the Imam (a.s) and the Imam (a.s) was honourably[6] answering him until they disagree over an issue. Imam Baqir (a.s) asked his son to bring the book of his grandfather. His son brought a huge rapped book. The Imam (a.s) showed the answer in the book and said: This book is dictated by the Prophet (P) and is written by Imam Ali (a.s). O Aba Muhammad (Hakam)! You and Salama and Abul Meqdam may go where ever you wish, but by Allah! You shall never find a reliable knowledge unless with those in whose house Gabriel is descended."[7]

Hammad al-Saegh said: "I heard from Mofadhal Ibn Omar who said: I was with Imam Sadiq (a.s) asking him some question that Abul-Hasan Musa (Imam Kadhem) entered the room. Imam Sadiq (a.s) said: Would you be happy if you see the one who will own the book of Ali (a.s)?! I would be honoured? I replied. The Imam Said: This (Imam Kadhem) is the owner of the book of Ali (a.s) after me."[8]

Soma'e said: I asked Imam Kadhem (a.s): Is whatever you say from the Book of Allah and the Sunna of the Prophet (P), or it is you opinion too? The Imam (a.s) replied: "Nay, whatever we say is from the Book of Allah and the Sunna of the Prophet (a.s)."[9]

Al-Jame'a in Sahih Bukhari

a) Bukhari in his Isnad from Abi-Johayfa narrated: I said to Ali: Is there any book with you? He replied: No, except the Book of Allah, an understanding that a Muslim is granted and what is in this Sahifa (book or paper). I said what is in this Sahifa? He replied: the expiation of a murder, (the rules concerning) freeing the captives and that a Muslim shall not be killed for a Kafir."[10]

b) Bukhari from Ibrahim al-Taymi from his father from Imam Ali (a.s) narrated: "There is nothing with us save the Book of Allah and this Sahifa from the Prophet (P), (in which there is): Madina is sacred between A'er and **so and so**."[11]

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[4] Al-Kolayni: al-Kaafi 1:62-63 Among the Sunni historians Ibn Sa'd (died 230 AH) has narrated the Hadith in short in the chapter of the virtues of Imam Ali (a.s): 2/2/101. Similarly, Nasa'i in his Sonan 1:178 has narrated the gist of the Hadith.

[5] Al-Kolayni: al-Kaafi 7:40

[6] In some versions of his book it is written 'Mokreman' (honourably) whereas in other version it is 'Mokrehan' (aversely).

[7] Al-Najashi: Rejal 2:261

[8] Al-Majlesi: Beharul Anwaar 48:22

[9] Al-Saffar: Basa'erul-Darajat p.301

[10] Bukhari: al-Sahih 1:36

[11] Ibid 2:221

c) Bukhari with the same Isnad narrated: Ali delivered a sermon for us and said: We do not have any book to read save the Book of Allah and what is in this Sahifa, in which there is (the expiation of) wounds, and the (number of) teeth of a camel (for Kaffarah) and the radius sacred area of Madina is what is between A'ir and **so and so**."[12]

Ibn Hajar (died in 852 A.H) in explanation of the first Hadith said: "The Sahifa of Ali (a.s) included all that the Ahadith of the Prophet although every narrator has narrated one part of it. This is because either the narrator was only concerned about the part he has narrated or he has forgotten the rest of it or the narrator was unaware of the rest of the Sahifa. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the narrators did not quote the actual words of the Sahifa, thus their wordings are quite different."[13]

Other Ancient Books of Hadith

Apart from al-Jame'a there were some other companions who did not submit their books to the then government. Unfortunately, however, most of these books have been destroyed or perverted throughout the history. For instance Ibrahim known as Abu-Rafe' was a salve freed by the Prophet (P). During the reign of Imam Ali (a.s) he was appointed as his treasurer. Abu-Rafe' had compiled a book on recommended acts, statutes and judgments.[14] Unfortunately, we don't have access to his book unless some Ahadith narrated through him from Imam Ali (a.s) or the Prophet (P). Most of the available Ahadith him are in virtues of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s).

The Secretes of the Family of Muhammad (P)

One of the most ancient books of Hadith that fortunately by and large it is available today is the book of Solaim Ibn Qais al-Hilali published as 'Asrar Ale Muhammad (the Secrets of the Family of Muhammad (P)).

Solaim was one of the distinguished companions of Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husain, and Imam Sajjad (peace be upon them). It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s):

من لم يكن عنده من شيعتنا و محبينا كتاب سليم بن قيس الهلالى فليس عنده من امرنا شيء و لا يعلم من اسبابنا شيء و هو ابجد الشيعة و هو سر من اسـرار آل محمد.

"Whoever of our followers and lovers does not have the book of Solaim Ibn Qays al-Hilali he does not have any knowledge about us and does not know anything about (causes of) our affairs. It is the alphabets of the Shi'a and it is a secrete from the secrets of the Family of Muhammad (P)."

In his book, Solaim narrated some Hadith from Imam Ali (a.s), Salman, Abu-thar and Miqdad (may Allah be pleased with them).

The Shi'a scholars are quite unanimous about the high status and of Solaim and his virtues. There is however a scholarly debate about the authenticity of the present book, as it contains some obvious perversions. For instance, the number of the Imams (a.s) according to this book seems to be thirteen Imams!

In my opinion this is not the first book that contains some perversions. As we shall demonstrate in the next lessons, Al-Kaafi; the best Shi'a book of Hadith is not also free from such perversions. The fair judgment about the book of Solaim is what the late Sheikh Mofid at the end of his book 'Tas-hihul-E'teqad' (Correction of the Belief) has asserted: "This book (of Solaim in its present version) is not reliable, for there has occurred perversion and deception in it. Thus, it is imperative for the believers not to accept all that is written in that book. They must refer to the scholars to distinguish for them the correct from the incorrect narrations."[15]

The Psalms of Islam

Another ancient book of Hadith is al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyah translated into English as 'the Psalms of Islam. Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyah is a heritage from Imam Sajjad (a.s). The present version of it consists of fifty four supplications. The original copy of the book has been more that the present one and it has always been kept with the Imams (a.s). The present copy has been dictated by Imam Sadiq (a.s) to Motawakkil Ibn Haroun. 'The Treaties on the Rights' (Resaltul-Hoqouq) is another book of Imam Sajjad (a.s) that is available today.

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[12] Ibid 4:67

[13] Ibn Hajar: Fathul-Bari 1:215

[14] Al-Najashi, Rejal 1:64-65

[15] Al-Khoei: Mo'jam Rejalul-Hadith 8:216-228

The Four Hundred Origins ('al-Osoulul-Arba'a Me'ah')

The time of the Abbasid was the golden age of spreading the Hadith, but then again not for the followers of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s). The following examples spell out the sever pressure on the Shi'a during the Omayyad and Abbasid dynasties.

1. Abu-Khalid Shinoola said: I said to Imam Jawad (a.s): "May I be sacrificed for you! Our teachers had narrated some Hadith from Imam Baqir (a.s) and Imam Sadiq (a.s). However, due to the sever Taqiyyah (Protection) in their times they hid their books and never narrated anything from it until they died. Today we have accessed their books. Do you allow us to quote from their books? The Imam replied: You may quote from their books for they are authentic."[16]
2. The story of the destruction of the books of Muhammad Ibn Abi Omair is even more painful.
   Muhammad Ibn Abi Omair (Ziad) was an eminent student of Imam Kazen and Imam Redha (a.s). He even enjoyed a high respect by the Sunni scholars. Muhammad was jailed during the reign of Haroun al-Rashid (the fifth Abbasid king) and was tortured almost to death. During the reign of Ma'moun (Haroun's son) he was again jailed for four years. During his imprisonment his daughter hid the books of her father in the attic of her house. When the father was released he attended the books. Unfortunately all his books of Hadith were destroyed by rain.[17] Since then Ibn Abi Omair narrated his Ahadith by heart. It is due to the above incident that the Shi'a scholars have opened special category for him and similar narrators called 'the Members of Unanimity' (As-Habul-Ejma'). They regard the Ahadith of *the members of the unanimity* as authentic even if they have not mentioned the name of the narrator they are narrating from. [18]

In spite of all the difficulties the Shi'a narrators faced they had compiled numerous books of Hadith. The late Najashi; the famous Shi'a expert in biography of the narrators (died in A.H) has named about 1200 Shi'a narrators in his book 'Rejal al-Najashi' who had compiled books of Hadith. Similarly, the late Sheikh al-Horr al-'Ameli asserted that the number of the books of Hadith compiled by the students of the Imams (a.s) according to his counting exceeds 6600 books.

Of all the books of Hadith, the students of the Imams (a.s) had selected 400 books known as 'al-Osoulul-Arba'a Me'ah' (the four Hundred Origins). The late Sheikh Mofid (died in 413 A.H) confirmed: "From the time of Imam Ali (a.s) to the time of Imam al-Askari (a.s) their students had compiled four hundred original books.[19] These books contained Ahadith that the narrators had directly narrated from the Imams (a.s). the four hundred origins were amongst the main sources for compilation of other books of Hadith such as al-Kaafi compiled by al-Kolayni died in (328 or 329 A.H) and 'Man La Yahzor' compiled by al-Sheikh al-Sadouq (died in 381 A.H).

[16] Al-Kolayni, al-Kaafi 1:53
[17] Al-Khoei, Mo'jamul-Rejal al-Hadith 14:279
[18] We shall explain about As-Habul-Ejma' in lesson
[19] For further information about the for hundred origins see Agha Bozorg: al-Thari'a Fe Tasanifa al-Shi'a 2: , al-Sadr: Ta'sisu Shi'a , and Sharafu-Ddin: Mokhtasarul-Kalam Fe Mo'allefi-Shi'a.